



PITCOONANS

(Sabbath Nights at Pitcoonans)

By

Charles Moody Stuart

Author of

SANDY SCOTT'S BIBLE CLASS
& THE BETTER COUNTRY.

PRICE 1/- NET. NEW EDITION (*Second Impression.*)

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YON STOUT MAN

THE Sabbath nights at Pitcoonans never seemed long while Sandy Scott's class continued, for it was always lively. Every one respected Sandy, but none of us were in "daur" of him, and we expressed our opinions somewhat freely. I remember yet one night when Jamie Stewart (for he was a surly character) literally growled out,—

"I dinna haud wi' thae 'vangelistic meetings."

"Na, lad?" said Sandy. "What ails ye at them?"

"What ails me at them? A'thing ails me at them. Gin folk maun hae 'vangelistic meetings they should keep to Bible ways wi' them."

"Nae mistak' but they should keep to Bible ways. Ye've a right to complain, Jim, gin they dinna keep to Bible ways. But we might hae a look at what ye would ca' a 'vangelistic meeting in the Scriptor', and syne we'll ken how to do."

"In the fifth chapter o' Luke, near half-roads through the chapter, we hae a sight o' a great muckle 'vangelistic meeting. It's no like ane o' thae meetings at Inchcraig, but an awfu' crowd o' folk, and a' the big folk at it. Pharisees and Doctors o' the Law sitting by frae ilka town far and near. The streets is black wi' folk, gentry and lairds and lawyers and a heap o' ministers forbye."

"And here's a man in a gey awkward fix. He's down wi' the palsy, and isna fit to stir; it's plain he canna get to the meeting. But it's no easy making things plain to some folk, for some o' his friends they've determined to carry him down. Four o' them's bargained to gie him a lift, so after their work's through they mak' themsel's snod, and gang up-bye to his house. And the wife she comes to the door, and she doesna ken what to think. She's used wi' them coming ane or maybe twa at a time to speir after her man and gie him the news, but when she sees the four a' at aince she's some put about, for there isna nae mair than the twa chairs in the ben room. They might hae let her ken their errand aforehand, but they didna, for whiles when folk ken things aforehand they're ready to raise objections. But the wife she sees a kind o' twinkle in their een, and says she, 'What's ado the night?'

"And ane o' the men, he would be a short stout man, says he, 'We've been scheming to tak' James down to the Master.'

"'James!' cries the wife. 'The doctor tell'd me it would be the death o' James to shift him off o' his bed.'

"'Likely enough,' says the stout man 'but it would be the life o' James to hae him down to the Master, and we was thinking to tak' bed and a', and to hap him weel up.'

"'Bed and a'!' says the wife, 'you're no blate.' But after she thinks owre it a wee, says she, 'Na, it'll no do, for it's no the best bed he's on, and I wouldna like to be put to shame afore folk.'

"So the stout man cries to the tither three, 'We'll awa hame then, lads. It doesna do for folk to be put to shame afore folk.'

"But they hadna gone nae distance when the

wife she cries to them to halt and says she, 'It's maybe mair shame to let James bide. I hae a right fancy cover that would set that bed fine, and if ye would pay partic'lar attention to keep it aye well happit, the bed wouldna be muckle noticed. And see and no let the cover draggle in the mud.'

"'Oh,' says the stout man, 'but we'll pay attention to that, and we'll study a'thing.'

"Says the wife, 'But James is a' to be redd up yet, it's a pity ye hadna tell'd us at dinner-time.'

"Says the stout man, 'We're no in nae hurry. Mak' ye a'thing snod, and we'll bide or you're through.' And says he to the tithers, 'The meeting doesna commence or half-eight so we hae plenty time. Ye hae aye to mak' allowance for women folk.'

"And after maybe a twenty minutes the wife comes out and bids them come ben for she has a'thing in order. And the stout man he tak's the west side o' the head o' the bed, and a slimmer man the east side, and the tither twa's at the foot. And although the Scriptur' doesna mention it, I wouldna be surprised but that the wife hersel' put on her things and took the road ahint them, for she maun be down to hear the upshot.

"But when thae four men gets near-hand the town they're terrible disappointed, for the streets is throng. Says ane o' the four, 'A rat couldna squeeze through that, let alone a bed,' and he sets his end o' the bed down wi' an ill-tempered jerk.

"'Canny, lad, canny!' cries the stout man, and they shift corners, and the stout man gangs to the front.

"It's no an easy job, but the stout man has a kind o' a way wi' him that tak's folk's fancy, and where ither folk couldna win bye themsel's he wins

bye wi' the bed. And syne they win up to the door, but the meeting's fu'. The polis has orders no to allow nae mair to come ben, and the polis maun aye be respec'it. The stout man, he's considering what's to be done, when the lad that gied the jerk cries out, 'A' our labour for naething, that's the end o' it.'

"'It's no the end o' it,' says the stout man, 'for gin we dinna get James to the Master we be to carry him hame again.'

"But the stout man he makes the acquaintance o' ane o' the polis, and speirs is there no nae possibility to win in. And the polis he says, 'Ye might try by the close off the nether gate.' And so they're off wi' their bed again, and when they gets round to the tither side the crowd slackens, and there's no nae folk in the close.

"'We'll try the roof,' says the stout man, and up they gang. But when he has a' his plans laid he minds on his promise to the wife no to let the bed be seen, so he tak's some pieces o' cord and binds the braw cover fair owre it. Syne he tak's thought o' how the meeting 'll be arranged and whereabouts the Master Himself would be. And when he's considered it a', says he to the tithers, 'We'll lift the tiles canny off here, and syne we'll set James down fair in front o' the Master.'

"And ane o' the tithers would say, 'We'll hae to gang down wi' him and explain the natur' o' his complaint.' But the stout man says, 'Na, we're no fit to explain the natur' o' his complaint, and we might mak' a mistak'. There's mair the matter wi' folk than folk ken, but the Master kens the natur' o' a' complaints. We're safe to trust James wi' Him.'

"But gin we're to hae a right sight o' it a', we

maun leave thae folk on the roof and gang round by the door and win ben inside, polis or no. And as we win in, the folk's a' looking to see what's ado wi' the roof, and after maybe a minute or twa here's James let down on his bed! The folk dinna ken what to think, but the Master kens, for the Master kent he was coming. And when He looks up to the four keeking down frae the roof, and sees their satisfied look, as though they would say, 'James'll be a' right now,' He sees they had confidence in Him, and to them that hae that He aye comes up to their expectations. A'body's looking, and ilka ane says to himsel', 'Pay attention now for it's gaun to be a miracle.' But na, it's an awfu' disappointment, it's no nae miracle ava', for the Master just says to the man, 'Thy sins be forgiven thee.' It's an awfu' disappointment; it wasna for that they carried him a' the road. But the man wi' the palsy he doesna look nane disappointed, it's miracle to him. Ye would think he would be like to greet that he's no to get healed after a', and ye would think his face would be black wi' shame to hear his sins spoken about afore folk. Ye would think he would cry to his friends on the roof, 'Haul awa' up, lads, for I'm no to lie here and hae my sins cracked about.'

"But patience, patience a wee, for we haena gotten a right look. Yon's him lying wi' a face like to laugh, and so far frae being shamefaced he's like as he had something to be proud o'—'glorying in his shame' as ye would say. But na, that's no the right sight o' him yet. He's lying yonder and he's like to laugh, and he doesna heed wha sees or hears; he's like as he had been left a fortun'. Ay, that's the truth o' it, he has been left a fortun', for he's gotten the receipted accounts o' a' he was due,

and nae wonder he canna look glum. A' the time he's been ill he's been sair troubled about his sins. When he hadna naething to think upon, they were aye there forcing themsel's forrit to his mind, whether he be willing or no. It's an awfu' job to lie on your bed gin your sins bena forgiven, ye canna escape the thought o' them. Gin ye be weel ye mayna tak' time for thought, and Satan aye keeps his folk at the trot for fear they get sight o' their sins. But set ye a man that hasna got his sins forgiven, set ye him for an hour or twa where he canna work, and canna read, and canna crack, and bid him think about himsel'; he would gie a' he possessed to win out, for there's naething mair fearsome to folk than themsel's. Them that ken what it is, ken what yon palsied man felt when he heard his sins was forgiven. It was a'thing to him and muckle mair than a'thing. It would tak' him a' his time no to sing out in the midst o' them a'. He would aye keep running owre to himsel', 'Thy sins be forgiven thee! Thy sins be forgiven thee!' It's the brawest news he's heard yet, for the Master's settled up a' that was due, and He mak's owre the dischairged accounts. A body can haud his head gey high when he has the dischairged accounts."

"It was grand," said Dave Paterson.

"Nae mistak' but it was grand, and gin I had been yon palsied man I would hae been like to cry to them on the roof, 'Haul awa up now, I can thole the palsy now.' But he had mair patience than me, and it was just as weel. You're never wise to hurry awa when you're near-hand the Master, for ye never ken how muckle mair's to come. So syne he gets healed o' the palsy as weel, for the Master has power to do onything and a'thing. It aye pays to gang to the Master."

"I would hae liked fine to hae been yon stout man," said Tom Duff.

"Plenty folk would like to hae been yon stout man, but it's no ilka ane would hae ta'en as muckle pains to gie a neebor a lift to the Master, or would hae haen as muckle patience. Patience is needed as weel as pains."

"But ane canna redeem his brither," said Dave Paterson.

"Na, ane canna redeem his brither, but maist o' folk can gie their brither a lift gin they're fair determined on it. Ye mind the impotent man lay thirty and eight year afore he got onybody to gie him a lift, and that was a gey disgrace to folk. He didna need nae mair than a lift to the pool, but naebody offered it. There's whiles a scarcity o' lifters. It's astonishing how a body can help a body."

"But folk arena aye very willing to tak' help, and it's no an easy job to compel them," said Dave.

"An easy job!" said Sandy, "I'm sair mista'en gin yon stout man had an easy job, for gin ever a body had the door slamm'd fair in their face it was yon stout man. He might hae said it wasna the will o' Providence for James to get to the Master, and he might hae said it ten times owre, for naebody would conterdic'; but folk dinna aye read Providence right. And gin ye want easy jobs ye've ta'en the wrong trade, Dave; but I ken ye better than ye ken yoursel', for ye're no the lad to stick at a stiff job."

"A body would hae mair heart til it, gin it was intellec'ual difeeculties they was ca'd upon to help. That lifting o' folk's mair machine work. Onybody can do it."

"Onybody canna do it, and what's mair, onybody doesna do it. And gin we're to pick and choose, folk 'll be like to speir 'Wha's master?'"

"A body would do their endeavour to get folk down to meetings or ony place where the Master was, gin they kent it would do ony good, but there's heaps o' folk gang to kirks and meetings and yet they're no nane the better."

"Man, Dave, it's a pity ye hadna been yonder to tell a' that to yon stout man. Ye would hae saved him his labour."

"Na, ye ken fine, Sandy, I would be the first to do it gin I thought it would do ony good."

"I ken that weel, but the fau'ts wi' ye in no thinking it would do good. Yon stout man was positeeve it would do good gin he aince had James to the Master. Be ye positeeve that it will do good, gin ye get folk to the Master, and wha kens but ye may hae as braw returns as yon stout man himsel'? Dinna be blate to let the Master ken ye're there, and that ye've somebody wi' ye. And there's this, yon stout man hadna nae notion that James was troubled about his sins. There's folk ye ken, and ye think they've never thought about their sins, but tak' ye them down to the Master and ye'll mak' this discovery, that a' their thoughts was about them. Ye think they're heedless, but they're no, for there's twa kind o' hypocrites. There's them that professes to heed about their soul's concerns when they dinna, that's the ae kind, and there's them that professes no to heed when they do, that's the tither kind, and it's no the kind there's fewest o'. Mak' ye up your mind, Dave, that a' 'ill be weel wi' your friends gin they aince come in contac' wi' the Master. Mak' ye it your business to hae them where the Master is, He'll

mak' it His business to heal them. Dinna believe it possible they'll hae to be carried hame again gin they're aince aside Him. Expec' a'thing and ye'll win a'thing. Expec' things that ye canna expec', for He's the God that does wonders, and wonders are the things folk canna expec'. Yon stout man expec'it wonders, and he got them too. He's wondering yet he got as muckle.

"But, bairns, there's this, I'm thinking the Almighty wonders at ye and me. He's waiting us wi' His hands fu' wi' blessings, and He's wondering why we dinna come. The wonder is no that He's willing to gie so muckle, though the very angels wonder at that, the wonder is that we're no willing to gang for it. There's muckle cause for wonder."

"Thae Bible meetings wouldna hae been nae mair to my liking than the Inchcraig anes," said Jamie Stewart as we went home.

"Then where does the fau't lie, Jim?" said Tom. "Is the fau't wi' the Bible or wi' your liking?"

Jim did not reply, and the rest of us were quiet. Some of us were wondering who it was whom we should lift to the Master, for we must needs lift some one.

A' THAE A'S

"**I** WONDER he wasna feared for a' thae a's," began Sandy one night, forgetting that we had not read a chapter.

"Wha wasna feared? Whatna a's?"

"Bairns, bairns, ye should pay attention when we read the chapter, and no speir needless questions."

"But we didna read nae chapter the night."

"Did we no? Then that was my blame, it's me that'll hae to pay attention. It's the hindmost half o' the tenth o' Luke. Tom, commence ye at the 25th verse."

We read the passage, and Sandy continued: "Weel, the thing I was saying was, I wonder he wasna feared for a' thae a's, but we maun commence at the commencement o' him. He was a lawyer, and lawyer-like he's thinking upon how he can get title-deeds made out; but no the ordnar kind, it was title-deeds that would gie him a claim to heaven. Says he, 'What shall I do to inherit eternal life?' For he sees how things in this worl' dinna last, and gin so be they do last a while, the folk they belong to dinna, so folk get benefit nae-way. But there'll hae to be some formalities gone through, some examination to be made afore ever he can mak' sure that he'll inherit it; so he mak's

enquiry. Says he, 'I'm some doubtfu' gin I could claim heirship, for I would hae to prove that I'm ane o' the sons o' God, and that winna be so easy done.'

"Says his head man, 'Would ye no speir at the Master?'

"Says he, 'I dinna just believe He is the Master.' But after a wee says he, 'I'll tell ye what—the Provost and Bailie Brown (for it would be in a town, and there's aye Provosts and Bailies into thae towns) are aye at me to try to mak' out the Master, as ye ca' Him, in the wrong, for gin His way be right their way maun be wrong, and they dinna like the idea o' that. So I'll gang down and speir at Him what proofs o' heirship is required. If so be He's no able to explain it right it'll aye please the Provost and the Bailie, and I canna afford to cast out wi' them.' That's what the Scriptur' means when it says the lawyer tempted Him. It wasna for the sake o' getting a right answer, but it was to please folk that werena friends wi' the Master.

"So down he gangs, and the Master doesna turn him awa, for when he speirs, 'What shall I do to inherit eternal life?' the Master speirs back, 'What is written in the law?' And though the lawyer wasna good he's been weel instruc't, and he's proud he can say his questions.

"Says he, 'The sum o' the ten commandments is to love the Lord our God wi' a' our heart, wi' a' our soul, wi' a' our strength, and wi' a' our mind, and our neighbour as oursel'.' And that was what I commenced wi', I wonder he wasna feared for a' thae a's—a' the heart, a' the soul, a' the strength, and a' the mind, for they're naething less than condemnation. But he was that glib wi' his answer,

he didna notice till it was owre late to stop, and when he sees the mistak' he's made, lawyer-like he passes it owre and speirs as to wha is his neebor, for he thinks he may get a road out that way, and that he mayna be questioned about what he's been doing wi' a' his heart, a' his soul, a' his strength, and a' his mind.

"And the Master doesna need to examine him on a' thae a's, but lets him ken what loving his neebor means by painting a bit o' a parable to him.

"Here's a traivelling Jew ; I've seen them whiles gaun down the glen hawking pencils and picturs and that, and o' a' the craiturs I would tak' a fancy to, thae traivelling Jews would be the hindmaist. And this ane is in a gey-like mess, for they've robbit his picturs and sponges and siller, and gien him a crack owre the head so as he wouldna tell nae tales, and gin he be let be a whiley he'll no come round. So a Jewish minister he gangs bye, but a' o' a sudden he finds that side o' the road is owre moist, and he minds he doesna do wi' wet feet, so he's off to the tither side. Syne a Jewish elder he gangs bye, but he sees it's no a fancy job. Says he to himsel', 'I'm that fasteedious kind o' a craitur I canna stand a sight like that,' and he traivels that fast awa a body would think the robbers was ahint him. Gin I had been near hand, I would hae been like to cry, 'Run, craiturie, run.'

"But syne a stranger he comes bye. He doesna like Jews o' nae kind, and as for thae traivelling Jews, he has a fair repugnance at them. He canna stand the sight o' a bashed-in head, and as like as no he's in a hurry to win hame. But he's bidden love that Jew, that traivelling Jew that's in sic a like mess ; to love him as himsel'.

“ ‘It canna be done,’ says he, and it’s aye a good job when folk can say that. I mind to this day o’ the satisfaction it was when the schoolmaster speired, ‘Tak’ awa twa frae naething?’ and we cried back, ‘It canna be done’; it settled a’thing. So this man he’s fell pleased when he cries, ‘It canna be done.’ But it doesna just settle a’thing wi’ him, for syne there’s a Voice cries out, ‘Just think he’s yoursel’.’

“ ‘Think he’s mysel’! Me a Jew!’ says he. ‘Me a traivelling Jew! Me hawking pencils! Me wi’ a head bashed in like that!’

“ ‘Just that,’ cries the Voice. And he canna gainsay that Voice. So syne he gangs up to the Jew, and says he, ‘Puir Jewie, this is an awfu’ misfortun’s befa’en ye,’ and he sits down there aside him on the road, and tak’s his head into his very ain lap, and if it’s no just a scientific kind o’ a patch he puts on his head it’ll haud it thegither meantime. Syne he makes him a’ clean and snod, so as ye wouldna ken he was ane o’ thae traivelling Jews, and syne he gathers up some o’ the bit pencils the robbers has skailed, and I’ll no say but the sairest rug o’ it a’ was to set him on his ain beast (for a body aye tak’s a pride in their beast), but it maun be done gin he’s no to quarrel wi’ that Voice. Syne he gies him a clap on the shouther, and says he, ‘Noo.’ And there’s mair meaning intil that ‘Noo’ than intil the half o’ a hail dis-coorse.

“ ‘We’re no tell’d what the lawyer said, but I’m thinking it was somelike this. ‘Gin conduc’ like that be ane o’ the proofs o’ heirship I’ll no can mak’ out my titles.’

“ ‘And yet wi’ it a’, the thing that would grip me maist would be a’ thae a’s, for a body might may-

be manage to love thae traivelling Jews at a pinch, but to love God wi' a' thae a's is a fair impossibility.

"Ye ken wee Johnny Rodger aye comes up to me to say his questions. So when I was taking a daunder through this chapter I says to Johnny, 'Do ye mind question forty-two, Johnny? What is the sum o' the ten commandments?' And Johnny was as clever at it as the lawyer, for says he, 'The sum o' the ten commandments is to love the Lord our God wi' a' our heart, wi' a' our soul, wi' a' our strength, and wi' a' our mind, and our neighbour as oursel'."

"'But, Johnny,' I says, 'that's a fair impossibility. How are we fit to face that?' Says Johnny after he thinks a whiley (and he's no nae mair than twal' his last birthday), 'Could ye no get the Master to be in company wi' ye?'

"'Man, Johnny,' I says, 'ye hae it noo. We'll hae to mak' a minister o' ye. I wonder what way ye saw that when I didna, for as auld as I am.'

"Says Johnny, 'It was hearing the folk crack about Mr. Sharp being in company wi' Sandy Taylor. Sandy wouldna hae gotten the contrac' for the steading at New Mill had he no got Mr. Sharp to be in company wi' him. They said Sandy would do the work fine but he hadna the siller.'

"'I ken, Johnny, I ken,' says I, 'I heard a' about Sandy Taylor and Mr. Sharp, but I didna see what it had to do wi' a' thae a's. Some folk are gey dull in the uptak'. And syne it was plain to me. Aforesyne I didna see how it was possible for me to love the Lord wi' a' my heart, and a' my soul, and a' my strength, and a' my mind, but as Johnny said, gin the Master be in company wi' us, in pairt-

nership wi' us, we'll manage and muckle mair than manage. So that's the formality we hae to gang through, to get Him into pairtnership wi' us, that's the examination that has to be made, to see whether He be in company wi' us.

"And it's no so ill as ye would think, to ken whether ye be a son or no. I mind ae day I was at the head o' my land, and I see'd somebody coming up the road, and as he gets near-hand, says I to mysel', 'I dinna ken ye but I ken the way ye walk,' and when he comes up, says he, 'That's been a fine day,' and thinks I, 'I ken your voice, and I ken your een'; and though I hadna seen him sin' he was a bairn, I kent it was the young laird, for he was his father a' owre, his walk, his een, and his voice."

"Ye may ken whether ye be a son or no," said Jamie Stewart, "but ye canna mak' yoursel' a son gin ye're no. That's no deniable."

"Dinna be owre sure, laddie. He says Himsel', 'As many as received Him to them gave He power to become the sons o' God.' Gin we be agreeable He mak's us sons; gin we're willing to be friends He mak's us bairns; we receive the adoption o' sons, but folk dinna aye ken what adoption is. They'll tell ye they've adopted a bairn, and that he has a' the same comforts, and is in a' respec' as though he was their ain; but afore you're awa they'll whisper to ye, 'Of course it's no the same thing as though he was my ain, I canna feel the same to him.' But the Almighty doesna whisper naething. He says we are His ain. 'Now are we the sons o' God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.'

“ We ken we’re His sons because we’re some like Him, and we ken we’ll get mair like Him because we’re His sons. And he that has this hope intil him purifies himsel’ as He is pure. What mair would ye seek ? ”

FAIR ON THE ROAD TO THE LINN

ANOTHER evening we read the 18th chapter of Matthew, at the 12th verse, of the man who had an hundred sheep, and one of them had gone astray. It was not new to us, but somehow as Sandy went over it all, we forgot we had ever heard it.

“The Master asks at the folk, ‘Isna this the way of it? If a man have an hunderd sheep, and ane of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine and goeth into the mountains and seeketh that which is gone astray?’

“And the folk, they dinna as much as cry back, ‘Yes,’ for it’s plain to a’body that that is the very way the man does do, he canna do ither than that; as soon as he kens the sheep’s awa’ he’s off after it. He would seek a’ the near ground first, and maybe he would gang hame to hear if there wasna nae word o’ it there. And when he kens there isna, he doesna halt for rest nor meat, for he’s feared it may fa’ owre some snag, maybe into the very Linn itsel’ or maybe a chance o’ the wolf getting it, afore he ever come up wi’ it.

“He’s off after it! I wonder sair will he get it? Watch ye him now, for it’s no long sin’ it’s been here. Ye’ll see by the look o’ the ground that that’s the road it’s ta’en. See yonder’s some o’ it’s

woo' on thae black-thorn busses, it's been in owre amongst them. It's like as though he would get it,—but na, it's off again. Wait ye now or ye see. Ay, there he is, and he's gotten a sight o' it! Yon's it owre on the north side yonder, fair on the road to the Linn. Will he get it afore it fa's owre? Ay, will he, he'll get it yet, for it's stoppit at yon piece o' sweet grass, a wee bittie back frae the brink o' the brae. Gin it would but rest and eat a whiley, he'll hae a chance to be in time,—but na, it's off! It's fair wild, and he'll hae to gang down into the den and cross the burn first afore he ever come up wi' it; he'll no get it. Ay will he! He will get it, for it's halted, it's getting fair wearied out—if it would but bide a bittie till he win round and in afore it! But na, it'll no bide, yon's it off again, it'll be owre the Linn afore he get time to kep it. Syne do ye see yon wolf coming up slinking ahint? It's no in nae hurry, for it thinks it canna miss; it's hiding ahint thae busses. But bide a wee or ye see. The shepherd's aye gaining ground, and the wolf it's no expect'ing him; bide, bide, or ye see. Ay, he has gotten the wolf and he's made short work o' it. But the sheep it's off again, it's fair terrified. And when it sees the shepherd coming it doesna ken him, it's mair feared than ever afore, it's off at the trot. I wonder will it or the shepherd win to the Linn-head foremaist? See, it's halted a meenit, and the shepherd may hae a chance to win round. It is a chance, but no nae mair than a chance. In another twa meenits we'll ken."

Sandy stopped for a moment, and then he said, "And if so be that he find it! If so be that he find it! If so be that he find it!" And the tears were actually in his eyes, so intent was he on the fate of the sheep.

"There isna nae mair than a chance, I wonder sair will he find it. 'If so be!' 'If so be!' 'If so be that he find it!'

"Ay has he! He has gotten it turned just on the very brink o' the Linn; he has found it! Did I no tell ye that? It is so be that he's found it. That's grand! That's grand! And it's that wearied out, it doesna hinder him frae getting a grip, and he lays it on his shouthers rejoicing. It wasna fit to traivel hame, and it doesna need. And he rejoices mair o' that sheep than o' a' the wyss-like anes he has at hame, and I dinna wonder at him, after a' the road he's been, I dinna wonder. He's gotten it and he's proud he's gotten it, and when he carries it hame he cries to a'boday to come ben and hae their supper wi' him, and there's a right spread, loaf-bread and a'thing. He doesna grudge it for he's that big that he's gotten his sheep.

"Some folk might wonder at him, for it's no muckle o' a sheep. A' the flesh is off its banes wi' that weary wandering, a' the woo's torn off its back wi' thae black-thorn busses, it's no fit to set its feet to the ground, its knees is cut, and it's blind o' an e'e wi' some bit stick that's struck at it; and a sheep like that, that's aince got into the way of wandering, it'll never settle down wi' the lave, it'll be off again. It wasna worth the finding. Na, it wasna worth the seeking, and it wasna worth the finding.

"Wha said that? It wasna the shepherd, it wasna the man that owned the sheep, or he wouldna hae cried his neebors in. It maun hae been worth the seeking, or they wouldna gang on that gait. They're a sing'lar sight thae folk, looking as if they never had care nor sorrow, and a' because

this poor bit specimen o' a sheep has been found. Ye dinna ken what to think o' them. Na, ye dinna ken what to think o' them till ye mind o' the man that rejoiced so sair because he had gotten his son back safe and sound. 'Safe and sound' he ca'd him when ilka bit o' his body had a tale to tell o' the road he had been. It wasna nane but his faither thought him safe, it wasna nane but his faither ca'd him sound when there wasna a sound square inch on him. And I'm thinking this shepherd that made so muckle o' finding his worthless sheep maun hae come frae the same part o' the country as that man that said his son was sound.

"But stop ye a meenit. I'm maybe wrong when I said that naebody ca'd him sound but his faither, for it was the servants said he was sound, and they had haen a sight o' him. I dinna ken what to mak' o' it, unless it be that what the Almighty ca's sound He makes to be sound. For wasna it Him that said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light? So I'm thinking it's Him that says o' His son, Let him be safe and sound,' and he is safe and sound. And I'm thinking now that I ken the part o' the country thae folk come frae, that shepherd and that faither. It's frae the Almighty's country they come; they maun be some friends o' His.

"Verse 14: 'Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish,' that ane should fa' owre the Linn, that ane should be catch'd by the wolf. And see what a fancy name the Master has for thae lost sheep, for thae lost sons. He ca's them 'little anes.' That wouldna be our describing o' them, but nae mistak' but they've a' been little anes aince. And as soon as ane o' thae little anes runs back hame, heaven itsel' has an extra song.

“The folk in heaven, they’re looking down, aye watching how we come on. And they’ve gotten word up yonder that somebody has wandered awa, and that the Shepherd’s awa off after him. They’re in a gey state o’ excitement to ken whether so be He’ll find him. Somebody’s mother ’ll be watching and somebody’s friends. Bide ye now or ye see. The Master, He’s got to the place the man was at, but he’s gone off again, and in among thae black-thorns, taen up wi’ some strange sheep, and fair on the road to the Linn, on the very road to ruin. The folk in heaven, they’re watching, and yonder’s Satan watching, slinking in among thae busses. But yonder’s the Master in sight, though the foolish man he doesna ken Him, and he’s feared to let Him win up. Pity, pity, but he would halt a meenit for he doesna ken the danger. He thinks he’s passed as bad afore, but he hasna. It’s death, it’s death if he’s no kept back. I wonder sair will the Master get him! Ay will He, for He’s gaining upon him, there’s no the same distance atwixt them, He’ll get him turned. But na, there he is off again, making fair for the Linn. I wonder which’ll be foremaist, the Master or him at the Linn. But stop—he’s fa’en on the road and gien a bit twist to his foot, that’ll gar him halt a meenit. ‘If so be that He find him! If so be that He find him!’ The friends o’ the man in heaven, they’re pressing in owre to see whether so be He’ll find him. That’ll be his mother yonder wi’ her hand on her harp ready to gie the first rap, if so be that He finds him. She’s feared to breathe, she’s leaning fair owre. I wonder sair will He find him.

“*‘All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.’* Is yon the man that’s crying that? Ay is it, it’s just the man,

Capital! capital! for he's gey near found when he kens he's lost. A'body kent he had gone astray, that he had wandered in his ain way, but he wouldna admit it himsel', for folk canna aye get a right look at themsel's,—but that's him at it again. *'All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.'* Capital! But feenish your verse, man, feenish your verse! *'And the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.'* Ay, He has gotten ye now!

"And didna ye hear that rap? That's his mother on her harp afore other folk ken He has found him. But ay, He has found him, and no twa meenits owre soon. It is so be that He's found him! Did I no tell ye that? And He lays him on His shouthers rejoicing, and He'll carry him a' the road hame. His mother was eager to see her 'little ain' saved, but his Saviour was mair eager yet.

"And King David, he's gotten his orders to start the tune, and it's to be a new song the night. After a' the excitement they're no content to sing owre some o' the auld anes, good though they be. The Master deserves a new song the night, and King David 'll no be long in making ane. I dinna ken the words o' it, for it would be new, but it would be some like the 98th Psalm—

'Oh sing a new song to the Lord
For wonders He hath done;
His right hand and His holy arm
Him victory hath won.'

Ay, He has won the victory the night." And Sandy stopped quite out of breath.

I do not think there was one of us inattentive that night. And as some of us walked home we

thought we could hear the sound of rejoicing over some "little one" returned. It was in heaven, but heaven was near that night. And it was unmixed rejoicing. We thought there would have been an undertone of sadness in it in fear of the future, but there was none. And then we remembered there was need of none, because goodness and mercy would follow him all the days of his life, and he would dwell in the House of the Lord for ever.

A BIT MARK ON THEIR BROW

AT times we had somewhat heated discussions as to Sandy's method of teaching.

"Method!" said Jamie Stewart one night, "he hasna nae manner o' method; it's a' mixty-maxty, and canna be profitable. The right way wi' a Bible Class is to commence at the commencement o' some book o' the Bible and work fair through; or to start wi' some theological subjec' and work steady on, up the ae drill and down the next till ye cover a' the ground; that's the right way o' it."

No doubt this was the more usual course, and Sandy himself felt that he was lacking in system. I remember his explaining one night, "I would never hae made a right minister, even supposin' I had been cultivate at the college, for my ideas is aye owre raivelled, I canna keep a' thing to its ain place. Gin I get a sight o' some fine bittie near the hinder end o' my chapter I'm aye off to hae a taste o' it, though there be good meat atwixt me and it, and that shouldna be. I mind ae day when I was in at the market I met Geordie Robertson's brither (it was James they ca'd him), and James and me was bairns at the school thegether. So James, he says he was gaun to his dinner and speired had I had mine's. 'No,' says I, 'but I hae a piece in my pouch'; but James he wouldna be

content wi' nae less but I maun dinner wi' him, and he took us to a right braw place where there was dinners for heaps o' folk. Says I to James, 'I'm no muckle used to dining wi' gentry, and I'm no just extra snod, so ye'll hae to excuse me.'

"'Excuse ye!' says he, 'I'll do naething o' the kind.'

"'But,' says I, 'I would be some bashfu' to gang in amang them a'.'

"Says he, 'Hoots, havers, Sandy, you're no nae waur than the lave.'

"I was some feared it might hae been to a public-house, and I wouldna hae gone, but I minded that James was temperance, so I had nae compunctions and in we gaed.

"There was first a bowl o' broth to the piece o' us, and, thinks I, I'm aye at hame wi' broth; but when we had little mair than commenced wi' the broth a lad comes ben wi' twa as tasty plates o' flesh-meat as ye would wish to see, and, thinks I, thae would eat fine wi' the broth, and I was just upon making a commencement wi' mine's, when James, he cries, 'Patience, Sandy, ilka trade has its ain regulations, and we maunna commence wi' the meat afore we're through wi' the broth.' I was some disappointed, but I didna let on to James. But when we had got started wi' the meat, what does the lad do but bring ben twa right fancy dishes wi' aipples and pastry and that. Says I to James, 'We'll get leave to commence wi' thae, though we're no just through wi' the meat?' but James he says, 'Na, there's a time for a' thing, and the like o' thae fancy things is aye for a finish up.' Weel, I was aye learning, and I'll no say we lost naething by giein' them a' their turn, though it was some vexing to see thae fancy things sitting there aside

us, and us no getting leave to touch them or we was through wi' a'thing.

"When we was through, says James, 'Ye was cracking, Sandy, about ye no being so genteel as some folk, but,' says he, 'ye hae a' the signs o' genteelity, for them that's genteel aye makes a clean plate.'

"Says I, 'It would ill become me no to mak' a clean plate when ye've been at sic an expense for it a'.' Syne I thankit the waiter for a' his attentions, and says I, 'Gin ye're west ony day as far as Pitcoonans ye'll be sure and gie us a cry in the by-gaun.'

"And as I gangs hame I thinks to mysel', gin it bena genteel no to eat a' that's set out for ye, I'm whiles no genteel when I'm readin' my chapter, for I dinna aye tak' time to eat a' that's afore me; and what's mair I raivel it, and maun awa to some tasty bit afore I'm through wi' the first o' it."

We were disturbed by hearing the sound o' a child crying on the road outside, so Sandy sent Tom to see what was the matter.

"What's ado wi' the bairn?" said Sandy as he returned.

"No very muckle; I think I've gotten her quiet now. I tell'd her greetin' wasna a payin' business and she was some surprised, and so I says, 'Na, it's no a payin' job, tak' ye to some ither trade,' and she's like as she was to consider the matter."

"Weel, ye've done right by the bairn, but afore ye a' came up the night I was busy reading about some folk that found greetin' a payin' business."

"Greetin'?"

"Ay, it's like as though there's a kind o' greetin' that does pay."

"It's no the ordnar kind?"

"Na, it's no the ordnar kind. The ordnar kind o' greetin' doesna pay, though folk maun hae a turn o' it, but we'll hae the history o' this new sort o' greetin' gin we read the ninth chapter o' Ezekiel.

"Now, there's the history o' it. There was like sax men that had charge o' the town, five o' them sodgers, and ane o' them a clerk wi' his pen and ink. And the clerk he gets his orders first. He's bidden put a bit mark wi' his pen on the brows o' a' the folk that's been greetin' and vexing themsel's for the ill that's done in the town. He's to gang fair through and no to heed them that's doing ill, nor them that isna distressed for the ill, but when he comes upon onybody that's sair vexed for a' the ill, he's to out wi' his pen and gie it a dip in the ink and draw his bit mark on their brow. I'm thinking he would hae to bend a bittie to get to the maist o' their brows, for them that's been vexed or greetin' they dinna haud up their heads.

"And syne the sodgers gets their orders to follow after the clerk, and slay a'body that hasna got the mark, women and bairns and a', and they're to commence at the Kirk. There's sermon in the Kirk that morn, and the folk that's there would say, 'The sodgers canna come near to us for we're aye reg'lar at the Kirk.' But there's ae thing about sodgers, they aye obey orders, and when the folk in the Kirk cries, 'Ye'll surely never come near to us, and us in the Kirk?' they cries back, 'In the Kirk or no it doesna mak' nae odds. It's no the Kirk, it's the mark that mak's the odds.'

"As like as no, when the clerk was busy marking there would be some wife that would say, 'Ye needna mark me, I dinna haud wi' publicity in religion, mair especially for women folk. Ye can see fine I've been greetin', but I'll just hae my re-

ward in secret.' But the clerk he says, 'Ye dinna ken what you're saying, woman, for the sodgers is to slay a'boddy that hasna a veesible mark.'

"We're like to say, 'Gin I keep out o' ill mysel' I'm no to blame for ill that's done by ithers when I hadna nae part in it; it's no for me to interfere.' But whether it behoves us to interfere or no we maun at a' times be vexed wi' a' that vexes the Master, for the distinction was atwixt them that was vexed wi' the ill, and them that wasna. Gin we bena amongst the good there's no anither place for us but amongst the bad. The Master canna thole half-and-half folk. There's some folk think it'll hae to be a great muckle sin that's to condemn them in the Day o' Judgment, but the Master's condemnation is 'I never knew you.' He didna ken them, they didna ken Him; they werena vexed wi' the things that He was vexed wi', and He'll hae none but His friends wi' Him. A'boddy kens folk canna keep up wi' friends gin they haena sympathy. Gin things is backward wi' me and folk dinna heed, I canna ca' them friends to me. And gin things is backward wi' them and I'm that muckle ta'en up wi' my ain concerns that I'm no vexed for them, I canna be ca'd a friend to them. A man that has friends maun show himsel' friendly, and gin things be backward wi' the Master's cause and we arena vexed we canna be ca'd His friends. Gin there be a rise o' a shilling or twa in the quarter o' wheat, ye can see it in folk's faces afore ever ye hear the news, and gin there be a drop o' a shilling or twa, ye can tell fine though they be mum as a mouse. So gin the cause o' God be prosperin' folk should be able to ken frae our faces, and gin the kingdom o' Satan be like as it was gaining ground folk

should be able to ken wi'out ever speiring a word. They should be able to ken but I'm doubtin' they're no, and it's no their fau't but ours.

"And dinna be feared to hae a veesible mark on your brow for you're no safe wantin' it, even though ye've been greetin'. I ken it's kind o' prominent when it's on a body's brow, but when folk ken they're marked it gars them look to their feet. It doesna do for marked folk to gang a' gait, they hae to be circumspec' in their ways; and what's mair, it whiles keeps folk frae temp'ing us, for though we dinna aye mind o' what's expec'it frae them that's marked, ither folk mind and they dinna seek us wi' them.

"But He winna put His mark upon us if we arena aye concerned wi' His concerns. It's when we're vexed wi' a' that vexes Him and proud o' a' that pleasures Him that He sends to put His mark upon us. Syne a'body kens Wha we belong to."

A FOOL AND HIS SILLER

“**N**AE mistak’ but he was a fool,” said Sandy, when we had read the parable of the rich man who had no room to stow his goods. (Luke xii. 16.)

“A body can near see him there as the grieve brings ben word that he doesna ken where to set a load o’ stuff that has just come in, and when he has bidden him just let it lie in the cart-shed for the night, or they see what’s to be done the morn, he says to himsel’, ‘I’m in a gey fix, for I’ve mair stuff than I’m fit to stow.’ And he speirs at himsel’, ‘What would ye do in a case o’ that kind?’

“‘Do!’ says himsel’, ‘the thing to do is this, to knock down a’ the steading and put up a’thing new, but in a mair magnanimous kind o’ a scale, and syne there’ll be room for a’thing.’

“‘I believe ye’re right,’ says he. So he has the masons and wrights ca’d in that he may expound his plans to them, and lame Geordie Grant to tak’ a note o’ a’thing, and gie the advantage o’ his advice; for Geordie kens aboot a’thing. (Leastways it wouldna be Geordie Grant, for it was in Bible times, but a Palestine species o’ Geordie Grant, for folk are like folk a’ the world owre.) The man would expound his ideas, Geordie would

dissolve them into yards and feet, and the masons and wrights would gie some notion as to the expense. So the steading it's a' renewed, an awfu' enlargement made, and a'thing done in right handsome style. And when the last lick o' paint has got time to dry, the man's fell pleased, and he cracks til his soul, and says he, 'Soul, you're no needing to be aye worrying yoursel' to the bane as to what's gaun to happen the morn, for I've laid out plans that'll avoid a' occasion for worry to ye. I've been at special pains and made arrangements for food and raiment to ye for fifty year to come, so ye may tak' thae creases out o' your brow.'

"'That's grand,' says his soul, 'we'll no need to care for naething.'

"But the Almighty had been listening, and He had taen notice o' a' the precautions the man had provided, and He says to him, 'Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?' The man had made provision for a'thing, but he hadna made provision for himsel'! He kent he had to live to a' eternity, but he didna mak' nae provision for that, so the Master says he was a fool. To see him on the road or hear him speak, ye would hae thought he was a sensible-like man, but a' the time he was a fool. And the Master says, 'So is he that layeth up treasure for himsel' and is not rich toward God.'

"This man hadna been the same description o' a man as a chap I heard at a missionary meeting. It was eight days past on Friday, and I was in at the town onyway, so I stoppit on or the late train that I might win to the meeting. The Provost he was their chairman, and they had a variety o' folk

to speak, some that kent their trade and some that didna. Some o' them gied ye a notion o' what was doing, and some o' them gied ye a notion o' naething, but that ye maun bide or they was through. Some were as dreich as the road to Newmyre, and near about as long. But there was this long lanky chap that rose hindmost, and though the maist o' his face was terrible circumspec', I kent he would haud us gaun. A man that was sitting aside me said that there's aye an arrangement that way at thae mission meetings, so as the best o' the speakers dinna commence to speak till the maist o' the folk's awa'.

"So when this chap gets up, he says he was a kind o' a stranger, for he had lived in some outlandish part, and hadna been hame for forty year; that a piece o' him had never been hame, for when he set out he wasna nae mair than five feet four, and gin they were to measure him now they would find him sax feet twa. He says he couldna mak' a speech and he wouldna try, but he would gie them his story, and they could mak' it into speeches for themsel's. He had been a hard-working man a' his days, but things had gone kind o' prosperous wi' him, and like some ither folk he had some baw-bees to lay bye, so he was to make an investment wi' it in some fine piece o' land out yonder. He said he would hae doubled his money in nae time wi' it, and ye could hear the folk in the meeting smacking their lips at the thought o' that. But afore the affair was settled the wife got wind o' it, and says she, 'Ye'll no put a penny piece into that, for what wi' volcanoes, and earthquakes, and great muckle tides o' the sea, ye'll rise some morning and find it isna there.'

"Weel, he says he couldna deny but what that

was true, so he says to the wife, 'What better can ye do?'

"Says the wife, 'Ye'll tak' the first boat and hame to Scotland wi' ye and buy your estates there. But,' says she, 'ye'll no buy naething but ye'll get a certificate that it'll aye last; nane o' your volcano estates for me.'

"So hame he comes, and after he makes enquiries, he lights upon some braw estate and makes his bargain business-like. But afore the papers was signded he minds on the wife, so he says to the lawyer, 'Just gie me a bit certificate that that estate'll aye last, for we're that fashed wi' earthquakes out our way it gars the wife be suspicious o' a' thing.'

"Says the lawyer, 'But I canna do that; there's no an estate in a' Scotland that'll aye last. For a' I ken the worl' may come to an end the morn, and where would my certificate be?'

"Says the tall chap, 'Come to an end the morn! That'll no suit me, I'm no such a fool as a' that.'

"So he gangs out to the door, and thinks he, 'No an estate in a' Scotland that'll aye last! What'll the wife say to that?' 'Them amongst ye that has wives,' says he, 'may ken I was in a gey fix, for I needna gang hame wanting my certificate.'

"So syne he gangs to another lawyer and speirs gin he had ony estates that would aye last, but he said there wasna such a thing to be had that ye could be positeeve o', a body maun just tak' their chance. 'Ah,' says he, 'but chance'll no do wi' me, my bawbees were owre hard won to risk them upon chance.'

"Syne when the lawyer sees he was fair deter-
mined upon an investment o' a durable natur', he

runs his hand through his head for a minute or twa to gar him think, and syne he says, 'Ye might try Mr. Scrymegeour at the next door.'

"So off he gangs, and if it wasna the headquarters o' some o' thae missions! And the upshot o' it was that after some conversations wi' Scrymegeour he laid out his money wi' him, and Scrymegeour wrote him a certificate that his money was invested in a treasure that wouldna fail (Luke xii. 33), and in a habitation that would aye last (Luke xvi. 9). And says Scrymegeour, 'That'll satisfice the wife.'

"Syne the tall chap halted a wee, and some laddie cried to his neebor, 'He'll catch it frae the wife.' And the maist o' the folk they heard it, and they couldna contain their countenance. But the tall chap he says, 'Na, ye dinna ken the wife. Women are aye deep, and I'll no say but that was what the wife was after when she bid me get the certificate.' And syne he said that as for doubling his money, he was to get his money back a hundred times owre. He had the word o' the Almighty for that (Mark x. 30).

"Says he, 'Ye needna think I'm telling my story for the sake o' vain-glory. There's naeboddy kens me here, but gin there were it's to my shame I hae to tell how I hadna paid attention to the Master's orders till they were forced upon me. I'm no like a new beginner, and I canna but wonder He's haen patience wi' me when I wasna obeying His orders. And,' says he, 'now that I've gotten to see things right my mind is a great heap easier. I feel some like the Apostle when he said he was a worker together wi' God, and it's grand.'

"Syne he says, 'I ken it's no a'body has spare bawbees to lay bye, but when I'm hame the now,

it puts me in mind o' how my mother was wont to do when we was bairns. She had enough ado to mak' things meet, and gin we was seeking new shoon or that, gin so be they would patch she would say, "Na, we haena siller for that." And,' says he, 'I mind to this day o' a pair o' my shoon that gaed fair into bits on me. There had been some patches put on, but, like the patch in the parable, the rents was made waur, for the leather was clean done, and I couldna but greet as I gaed hame, as there wasna siller for new anes. But as soon as my mother gets sight o' them she cries that I maun hae a new pair, and when I cries back that there wasna siller—"Havers!" says she, "it's needcessity for ye to hae a new pair, and there's aye siller for what's needcessity." And that was aye her way. There was never nae siller for extravagance, there was never nae siller for wastry, there was never nae siller for new things gin the auld could be sorted up, but there was aye siller for needcessity.'

"Says he, 'There's heaps o' folk the same. They haena spare bawbees, but gin a thing be a real needcessity, is there no aye siller for that?' And syne he halted again, and syne he says, 'This work o' the Master's canna wait, it's no an extravagance, and it's no wastry. The heathen folk'll no patch, and it's a needcessity to tell them o' the love o' the Master, and I ken there's siller for that. Is it no a downright shame,' says he, 'that folk buy a' the needcessities o' life when they winna buy the needcessities o' eternity?'

"And as the meeting commenced to skail, the chap that was sitting aside me says, 'A fool and his siller's soon parted.'

"'Yes,' I says, 'it's a positeeve fac', and when

ye see folk storing up their siller here, ye hae aye the thought that maybe this'll be the night when the Almighty is gaun to part them and their siller, but the like o' that tall chap there he kens what he's doin', for he'll hae his siller aside him to a' eternity. It's no mony folk has as muckle sense.'"

And then Sandy said with a sigh, "It would be fine to start a 'needcessity fund' to gie a bit hand to thae missions."

THE NATUR' O' THE CIRCUMSTANCES

"**I** WAS very near beat wi' that," said Sandy, as he settled himself down in his chair.

"What was like the natur' o' the circumstances?" said Tom.

"That was the very thing that put me wrong, lad, that I didna right consider the natur' o' the circumstances. Ye'll find them in the eighth chapter o' Matthew, in the fourth o' Mark, and in the eighth o' Luke, but ye'll need a' your wits about ye.

"The Master had been teaching down by the sea, and when He was through He gies orders to sail across to the tither side.

"Syne an awfu' storm o' wind gets up, but He's fa'en owre asleep; the waves is into the very boat so that she's filled wi' water, but He's asleep; they're like to drown in the depths o' the sea, but He's asleep.

"Wasna it strange how He was asleep? Wasna it strange He didna care? Wasna it strange He could sleep when His folk was in trouble, when His folk was in danger, when His folk was near death, and what was waur, when His folk was in doubt o' His power? They would aye be in the way o' singing the 121st Psalm—

'Thy foot He'll not let slide, nor will
He slumber that thee keeps;
Behold, He that keeps Israel,
He slumbers not nor sleeps.'

But here's just the very opposite o' that. Here's like as though He was letting them slide, boat an' a', to the bottom o' the sea. Here's like as though He was slumbering that them keeps, like as though He that kept Israel was slumbering and sleeping. What do ye mak' o' that?"

"It's strange," said Tom.

"Ay is it, Tom, lad, it's mair than strange. And ane o' the folk in the boat might maybe say, 'That's just as I said. Ye canna aye count on the Master's help. Ye'll get it in the generality o' times, but no at ilka time. There's whiles when ye'll just be left to yoursel'. Ye would hae thought when He was in the very boat wi' us no evil would befa'; but na, this world was meant to be filled wi' sorrow, and we maun tak' our share o' it. When the warst comes to the warst it's aye on our ain backs the weight fa's.'

"But I wouldna heed what yon man says, for I dinna believe a word o' it. It's no the case. The Master asleep when His folk's in trouble! It canna be. Says I to mysel', 'Will ye no believe your ain een?' 'No,' I says, 'no at the expense o' the Master.' Says I again, 'It's in the Scriptur' there afore ye. Look at it in Matthew, look at it in Mark, look at it in Luke, for ye'll no mak' a better o' it. Ye may learn what lesson ye like, but them's the fac's o' the case.'

"The Master asleep when His folk's in trouble! 'I dinna believe it,' says I, 'but I dinna see daylight upon't.' Syne a' of a sudden I sees it plain. Where was the Master a' the time? He was in

the very same boat wi' His folk, and gin they sink He sinks wi' them; gin they gang to the bottom o' the sea He gangs wi' them; gin they perish, I'm thinking we hae liberty to say He perishes wi' them; and gin that be the natur' o' the circumstances, Tom, lad, I'll no complain. Syne I says to mysel', 'Ye hae less sense than I thought ye had, no to hae seen that afore.'

"'If it be Thou,' says Simon Peter, 'bid me come unto Thee on the water;' and as well may we cry, 'If Thou be in the boat let it sink awa'! We'll aye mak' some discoveries we hadna made afore. The bottom o' the sea is as good as the top ony day gin the Master Himsel' be wi' us.' They tell me thae diving folk tak's a puckle o' fresh air wi' them to haud them gaun when they're down, but here ye hae the whole o' heaven down wi' ye. Haud ye your peace however deep down ye hae to gang when that's the natur' o' the circumstances."

"The like o' that's mair profitable for folk that hae to do wi' the sea," said Geordie Smart.

"Geordie, lad, is that a' ye ken? Do ye no ken that the sairest storms is aye on the land, that when the day comes for the Master to mak' enquiry as to wha has braved the storm the best, wha has stood out the sairest storms, as like as no it'll be some poor, bed-ridden auld wife that's never been in sight o' the sea that's singl'd out for the prize? Some poor auld wife that didna despair when the waves was owre her, that didna let on by word or look that ony by-ordinar' trouble ailed her; some poor auld wife that cried wi' Job, 'Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him!' For it aye brings praise to the Master when His folk dinna doubt, though they're like to drown.

"And there does come times when the Master

seems to hae fa'en asleep, seems as He didna care. And when His folk cries out, 'Carest Thou not that we perish?' He doesna seem to heed, He doesna seem to interfere. There isna a streak o' light, though ye look east or west for't, north nor south it isna there, it's like naething but dark despair, and He's asleep. But wait ye a wee! He's worth the waiting for. Ye little ken what braw things is to come. The Master would hae sent help afore now had He no been in the boat wi' ye. It's because He's aside ye He lets things be so desperate. He can stop it a' in a wee moment o' time as soon as He says the word. Mair easy to Him to still the storm than to a mother to hush her bairn. No sooner does He say 'Peace be still,' than a'thing's quiet, there isna a cheep to be heard. The very waves haena liberty to swing themsel's back, they fa' down flat like the wa's o' Jericho.

"But I'll no say but I've gone off the rails a bittie, for thae folk didna gang down in the sea, and what's mair they couldna hae gone down when the Master was wi' them. Gin ye be in the same boat wi' the Master no storm can ever sink ye. 'Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature' (it's thae other craitur's I'm aye terrified for) can ever sink ye, gin ye be in the same boat wi' Him.

"And dinna be owre hasty to cry out, 'Carest Thou not that we perish?' Maybe there might be ane o' the disciples that wasna disturbed for a' the storm. When the boat's full he would sit there calm's ye like, and when the tithers was running here and there fair distraught wi' fear, he

would cry, 'What ails ye? The Master's in charge o' this boat, and I'm no a grain feared.' And wha kens but when the sons o' God came to present themsel's before the Lord, and Satan came also amang them, but that the Master would say to Satan, 'Hast thou considered My servant that could trust Me when I was asleep in the storm?' For the Master notices a'thing.

"And there's this, gin there was intimation made that that boat was to sail again on the same passage, was to face the same storms, be in as muckle danger, and hae the Master asleep on board o' her, I'm thinking this, that thousands o' folk would be keen to tak' their passage wi' her. The thought o' the storm wouldna keep them back, for they wouldna be feared, and a'body kens how it's fear gies force to a storm. Shame on us syne, gin we would hang back on a like journey.

"I mind o' a right braw pictur' I got when I was buying a puckle tea at the New Year time. It was like an almanack for the New Year, and there was a pictur' o' a lifeboat out in a storm; and ye wouldna believe, for a' the storm that there was, and the folk in the very jaws o' the sea, they didna appear to be nane dismayed, they werena feared, and they werena flustered. Thinks I to mysel', when thae folk can be so confident like, should I be less when the Master Himsel's in the boat wi' me? Would I be willing to hae my portrait taen in the time o' my distress? It'll hae to be my endeavour no to hae a doubt when He's in the boat, let the storm be what it likes. I'll let folk ken by my looks that I can trust Him, that I'm no feared, than I'm no flustered. I'm whiles half sorry I parted wi' that pictur', for the

faces o' thae men in the boat was a real study, I aye got a lesson frae them. But Meg Maxtone up at the head o' the town, she got into a kind o' a doubting state after a' her troubles, and I thought she needed the pictur' mair than me, so I gangs up wi' it til her. And she's tell'd me often sin syne she wouldna part wi' it for siller.

"And we'll hae to mind this, that if so be we lose heart in the storm we'll hae to face the Master's question, 'Why are ye so fearfu'?' Why was I so fearfu'? I'm no in nae hurry wi' my answer, for I ken it's to my shame I was feared. But if He maun hae an answer, a' I can say is, 'Because I was a great muckle fool, for I didna keep mind on the Master's power, I didna keep mind on the Master's good will, and I didna keep mind that Satan was watching. Ay, I was a great muckle fool.'

"And when the storm is owre, and things is quiet to ye, and folk commence to speir, 'Whatna manner o' Man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?' cry ye back, 'It's no nae manner o' man at a', it's the living God, and it's Him we hae in the boat wi' us.'"

We sang the 121st Psalm, but at the end of the second verse Sandy stopped and said, "Gin I had haen ony choice o' tunes I would hae taen ane that would put mair fulness into thae lines, and syne they would bide wi' a body; a tune that would gang wi' a kind o' a chorus as it were.

'He slumbers not nor sleeps,
He slumbers not nor sleeps;
Behold, He that keeps Israel,
He slumbers not nor sleeps.'

BELIEF O' A PRACTICAL KIND

AS we were going to the class Johnnie Gray was lounging about in his working clothes, and as he saw us he shouted, "Speir ye at Sandy as to what benefits belong to believing. The like o' me believes a'thing, and yet I'll no say I'm ony partic'lar credit to Pitcoonans."

We knew it was useless to attempt a reply, so merely said we would enquire.

"Never heed him," said Sandy, "for when ye've cast your pearls to the swine, and they've trampled them under their feet, they'll turn again and rend ye. But gin ye would seek to ken for yoursel's the benefits o' believing, I'll no say but what auld Mr. Ritchie owre at Sprondle laid it down as plain as ever I heard.

"It was the time o' the 'Revival,' there was special preachings in a' the kirks, the talk o' a'body, good and bad, was a' on the ae concern, and Mr. Ritchie was owre here constant. I mind to this day o' a Monday morning, as I was throng pu'ing my berries (it was straeberries I had, and it was that westmost piece I had them in), Mr. Ritchie comes up the foot-roadie there, and the berries was like to be spoilin' on me, so I didna rise to tak' him ben, and he speirs would he come in amongst the berries.

“‘Yes, Mr. Ritchie,’ I cries, ‘for I’m fair pushed wi’ them, but see and mind your feet, and no tramp on the berries.’

“‘Sandy,’ says he, ‘they’re safe wi’ me, for thae past weeks I’ve just been like as I was treading amongst berries, I’ve gotten to be right partic’lar where I place my feet for fear I tread on the Master’s berries.’ Syne he tasted a berry or twa, and says he, ‘Sandy, it would be fine gin the Master had berries like that off Pitcoonans. Them’s a refreshing to me and the tither kind would be a refreshing to the Master.’

“Says I, ‘Mr. Ritchie, I believe there’s as good berries as ye would wish to see coming on for the Master in Pitcoonans, and gin I had time I would ask your advice upon ane or twa things that I’m feared’ll maybe hinder them; but I’m owre sair pressed wi’ my ain.’

“Says he, ‘Sandy, the Master’s work maun be aye the hindmost.’

“‘Mr. Ritchie,’ I says, and the tears was into my very een, ‘ye ken that’s no my way, but thae berries o’ mine is spoilin’, and I’ve my rent to meet.’

“‘Hoots, Sandy,’ says he, ‘I wasna in downright earnest, I ken ye owre weel for that. Let me see a hold o’ a toom basket.’ And if he didna commence and pu’! But a’thing had to be done in order, so I says (and I’ve wondered I wasna blate), ‘Commence at the foot o’ the row, Mr. Ritchie, and see and no hash naething.’ Syne he speired would he get leave to eat a blemished ane to himsel’ now and again. ‘Ay,’ says I, ‘and mair than leave.’

“Syne says he, ‘This mak’s a body feel young.’ But when he was through wi’ his second row he

was scarce fit to rise to his feet. Says he, 'This mak's a body feel auld.' And syne he says, 'Prayer and provender'll hinder no man, we'll awa' down and rest a wee.' And as we was coming down he says, 'I wonder your back isna sair, Sandy.'

"Says I, 'My back is sair, but prices is good the now, and the crop's heavy, and that aye mak's an odds on a body's back.'

"Says he, 'It's the same wi' me, for I didna think I had as muckle smeddum as would hae got through thae past weeks, but the Master's fruit was there, His prices is aye good, and I'm no a hair the waur o' it.'

"Syne I tell'd him o' a bit scheme I had o' planting my berries on a steep brae-side, so as when I begu'd to get auld the berries would aye be the easier pu'd, and I wouldna hae to stoop so sair. I mind he was pleased wi' the notion o' it, for, says he, 'That's a right solacement to me, to think that as I get less fit to gather the Master's fruit He'll bring the fruit half-roads to me, for He kens our frame that we haena aye the same suppleness.'"

(Some of us were so much taken up with this "bit scheme" of Sandy's that we went up to him on the Monday to see if he could not procure such a piece of ground. Dave Paterson was our spokesman. "It's a pity ye hadna got Jock Ferguson's land, that's a fine brae-side for berries," said Dave.

"Ay, Dave, Satan tell'd me that long syne, and I says to mysel', 'Gin onything was to happen to Willie Spence,' for it was him that had it then, 'that would suit me fine.' But I see'd what I was after, so I cries back to mysel', 'Alexander,' for the schoolmaster was wont to ca' me Alexander when I was to blame for ony caper, as it had mair im-

pressiveness than Sandy, 'Alexander,' I cries, 'the tenth commandment is "Thou shalt not covet," and I ken a mair simpler way out o' your difeeculty, and it's this—gin onything was to happen to ye yoursel' ye wouldna require nae man's land.' So I've haen nae mair word o' schemes on ither folk's land sin' syne.")

"So Mr. Ritchie and me conversed a wee, and he considered how a grain o' advice might be gien here, syne a bit spark o' encouragement there, and maybe the sma'est shade o' a caution yonder, and syne afore he was awa', says I, 'Mr. Ritchie, some o' the preachers that was here was aye crying "Believe! Believe! Only believe and nae mair"; and I dinna cast out wi' it for it's Bible words. But some o' the folk didna right see the lie o' the ground, and when the preachers cried "Believe," they was that determined no to miss it that they like forced themsel's to swallow the word "Believe," syne clenched their teeth and wouldna let naething convince them but what they was right; and it doesna appear to be working right. Ye ken I would be the hindmost to cast out wi' Scriptur' language, but ye'll no misunderstand me, Mr. Ritchie,' says I, 'gin I was to say that there's ane or twa words in the Scriptur' folk hae gotten a kind o' mixed wi', and gin things was exemplified to them, and no owre muckle stress placed on the very letter o' the Scriptur', it might be a help to a wheen.'

"'I believe you're right,' says he.

"Weel, the very next Sabbath after he was through at Sprondle he comes owre to hold a bit meeting here, and when he reads the chapter about the Philippian jailer I kent what he was after, and I thinks to mysel', 'I hope I've no played mischief

wi' expounding my ideas to him, for it's them that's fools that's meddlesome.' But I kent Mr. Ritchie, that he didna want for sense, and that he wouldna put his foot on the Master's berries, so I didna fash mysel'. When he commences his discourse, he says, 'This is no to be a set sermon the night, but just a bit word o' exhortation as it were.'

"Says he, 'I'll wonder whiles about a' the conversation Paul and Silas would hae wi' this Philippian jailer, for they had no sooner tell'd him to believe than they spake unto him the word o' the Lord, and that wouldna be done in a sentence or twa. I would hae liked fine,' says he, 'gin we had haen the news o' it—a' the Apostle's expoundings, a' the jailer's objections, and Silas aye joining in wi' a word now and again. But,' says he, 'the folk in Bible times would hae different varieties o' similitudes frae the like o' us here, and gin we had the very verbatim o' their conversation it wouldna be as muckle advantage, as when we ken the drift o' it, and can like fabricate the language to oursel's. We ken the rules and the lines the Apostle aye gaed by, and gin we keep to the square o' them we'll no be the eighth o' an inch off his discourse.' I mind I was some vexed with him speaking o' the eighth o' an inch as if it was naething o' consequence, for the eighth o' an inch in some trades is aye a considerable consideration; but a body would hae to be exceptional thrawn to tak' up wrong ideas frae Mr. Ritchie.

"Supposing,' says he, 'this had been a jailer in some o' the big towns here, and it was me that was endeavouring to mak' plain to him what he must do to be saved, I would commence wi' the Apostle and say, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." But the jailer would be

like to say, "Mr. Ritchie, ye dinna ken me or ye wouldna think believing would mak' ony odds. It maun be something o' a practical kind, or it'll no be nae benefit to me."

"Says Mr. Ritchie, 'I would expostulate wi' him, and cry, "See here, jailer, there might hae been a time when folk didna ken they had to eat their food, when folk was starving for want o' food, and didna ken what was the matter wi' them, like as though they had lost their senses as to that. The food would be there aside them, the folk would be deein' for want o' it, but wouldna believe it would do ony good. Ye could conceive o' a circumstance like to that, jailer?"'

"'Yes,' cries the jailer.

"'Weel, jailer,' says Mr. Ritchie, 'some man that see'd the strange notions they had might come amongst them and cry, "Here, man, here, it's bread and meat and a drink o' water you're needing. Haste ye now or ye'll be a corp."' "Woman, see here, mak' that into porridge, gie a' the bairns a sup, and ladle out milk as fast as ye can." But the folk would pay no heed, and would cry back, "Na, we're no such fools as to believe that food'll do ony good, we've a shade mair intelligence than that, that's what ye ca' materialmasm." But some auld wife that was gey far through would cry to the man, "Materialmasm or no, ca' awa' here wi' your porridge and milk, for I maun hae a trial o' it." And after she's haen a spoonfu' or twa she finds the benefit o' it, and cries she, "That's the stuff to put life into ye." Syne some would be prevailed upon to tak' a sup o' it, and would commence to mend, and ithers wouldna as much as let ye mention the thought o' food to them, and their life would sip fast awa'. The man would get agitated

wi' the excitement o' it a', and he would run round and cry, "A'body that believes in porridge and milk haud up their hands." And he would fill their cappies wi' it and send it round. "This way for the porridge and milk," he would cry. "A'body that believes in porridge and milk in owre here wi' their cappies." A'body that believed in porridge and milk would be hale and hearty in nae time, them that didna would be deein' fast. How did believing mak' ony odds, jailer?'

"Says the jailer, 'Believing would mak' this odds, Mr. Ritchie, that them that believed would tak' their food, and the food would put life into them, while them that didna believe, they wouldna tak' it, and they couldna be cured. Believing would mak' a' the odds. But that's no like doctrinal belief; that was belief o' a practical kind, Mr. Ritchie.'

"'Exac'ly, and it's belief o' a practical kind that'll save ye and me, jailer. But see ye here; there might hae been some o' thae folk that believed that food would benefit them, but wouldna rouse themsel's to tak' it. What would be the benefit o' that belief, jailer?'

"'A bairn could answer that,' says the jailer, 'for there's no nae possibility o' benefit frae belief o' that kind. Belief that hasna legs to walk upon isna worth twa straes.'

"'Exac'ly,' says Mr. Ritchie. 'But see ye here a minute yet, jailer. There might hae been some auld wife that was sair perplexed when she heard the man cry, "A'body that believes in porridge and milk haud up their hands." She would be like to say, "I'm no a scholar and I couldna say whether I believe in it or no. I haena as muckle knowledge o' philosophy as to ken about belief and that, but

I'm for a big share o' that porridge and milk, for I canna thrive wanting it." And as her ain cappie was some on the sma' side she gets hold o' an auld tin pail that she may get her fill o' it. Would there be ony benefit to her, jailer?'

"'There would be a' benefit to her, Mr. Ritchie, and I see what you're after now. The benefit o' belief is to gar ye tak' the road to the Master, and gin ye gang to Him wi'out kenning right whether ye believe or no ye needna care. Gin ye gang to the Master, as I understand ye, that's a' thing.'

"'Exac'ly,' says Mr. Ritchie.

"'But I thought,' says the jailer, 'I had to believe a great heap o' doctrines.'

"'Doctrines is aye usefu', jailer, and they're fine for keeping folk frae floundering, but the first thing ye've ado is to gang to the Master Himself, and He'll let ye ken about the doctrine a' in good time. And there's anither thing yet, jailer. Some o' thae folk when they had taen their food reg'lar, for maybe a week's time, might say to themself's, "I'm no needing to tak' nae mair food now, for I've gotten fine and strong, and it's a fair waste o' time for them that's in health to tak' food ilka day. The food I've eaten this past week should sair me a twel'month onyway." What would ye say to them, jailer?'

"'I wouldna say naething, Mr. Ritchie. Gin folk was as unreasonable as that I wouldna speak to them.'

"'I couldna blame ye, jailer. But I've kent folk gang to the Master for a' their requirements, and long afore the week was out they would be crying to themself's, "I'm no needing to gang to the Master ilka day, for it aye tak's up a body's time, and I've got a' thing I require. The grace I've

gotten the now should sair me a twel'month." That doesna stand wi' reason, jailer, for folk fail fast that haena constant food, and folk fail faster that haena constant traffic wi' the Master. Keep ye aye in mind o' that.'

"'And how am I to commence?' says the jailer, very near at the greetin'.

"'Just mention to Him a' your requirements, jailer, in a wee word o' prayer. And if ye're no a great hand at words ye may tak' the loan o' King David's words in the 51st Psalm—

"After Thy loving-kindness, Lord,
Have mercy upon me;
For Thy compassions great, blot out
All mine iniquity.

"Me cleanse from sin and thoroughly wash
From mine iniquity;
For my transgressions I confess,
My sin I ever see."

Tell Him you're steeped in sin, and ask at Him to steep you in the blood o' the Lord Jesus. You're no needing ony wealth o' words.'

"'And syne,' says Mr. Ritchie, 'I would leave the jailer a whiley; and when I gets back I would speir, "Is there ony benefit in believing, jailer?"'

"And the jailer he would cry, 'There's a' benefit in the Master, and I maun awa' to tell the wife and weans.'

"Ay, Mr. Ritchie was a fell hand to mak' things plain."

WE HAE AYE THE BEST O' IT

NEXT night as soon as we had finished singing Dave Paterson said to Sandy, "Ye was saying last Sabbath that believing was just the same as coming to the Master, and I canna say but ye were right : but there's like as though there's whiles mair than that into believing."

"Mair than that ! Nae mistak' but there's mair than that, laddie. Yon that we was cracking about last Sabbath was ane o' the aspec's o' believing, but it wasna nae mair than just the first peep o' it— 'He that cometh to God must believe that He is,' or he couldna come, 'and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him,' or he wouldna come. But we might do waur the night than hae a sight o' anither aspec'.

"See here's ane here in the 21st chapter o' Matthew. The Master's gaun into the town, and there's a fig-tree forrit a piece on the road, so He comes up and seeks for fruit, but on a' the tree there isna nane ; a good-like tree but no nae fruit. And the Master says that a tree like yon, it should hae haen fruit ; and when He finds there's nane, He says nae fruit'll ever get leave to grow on it mair, and syne the fig-tree withers awa'.

"The disciples canna comprehend the situation, what way a tree like yon, as good a tree as in a' the

parish, and as like life, should fade that fast awa'. But the Master explains to them how, when He bade it wither, He believed it would wither. And though He had a' power in heaven and in earth, it wasna the word o' power He spake to the fig-tree, but the word o' faith, and that was a word that ony o' them might speak. 'If ye hae faith and doubt not ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig-tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.' If ye hae faith and doubt not, that's a' that's required gin it be sought in the Master's name."

"Whatna distinction would ye draw atwixt believing and faith?" said Geordie Smart.

"The same distinction as we was wont to draw atwixt three times four and four times three; it was aye twal' when we was at the school, whatever way we looked at it."

"And whatna definition would ye gie o' faith?"

"Whatna definition? Ye're heavy on the questions the night. I would gie the Scriptur' definition—'Faith is the substance o' things hoped for, the evidence o' things no seen.'"

"It canna be a substance," said Jamie Stewart, "for gin my acquaintanceship wi' philosophy be correc' a substance maun hae some substantiality, a thing a body can grasp."

"And can folk no grasp faith, laddie? That's a' ye ken. Frae the time o' Abraham back, folk hae aye filled their neive wi' it. I ken there's new discoveries, but folk haena found and winna find a substance that has mair substantiality than faith."

"Ye said it was an evidence o' things no seen, but

ye canna hae evidence o' a thing that hasna been seen."

"Ay can ye, lad. Gin ye hae faith ye see the things that arena there to see. When Noah hears frae the Almighty that the flood was coming, he has evidence o' it though he didna see it for a hunderd year to come. The Almighty see'd it coming, and Noah believes the evidence o' the Almighty. It's the same wi' a' the saints o' God. They see'd things plain that werena there to see, because the Almighty see'd them. And that's what we maun do. 'What things soever ye desire, when ye pray believe that ye receive them' when ye haena received them, and when it's no like as though ye would receive them, 'and ye shall hae them.' (Mark xi. 24.) The Almighty sees far ahead, He sees them there waiting for us, and we hae His word o' truth as evidence o' it.

"I mind o' a man telling me how when he was a sma' bit o' a laddie he had a fair fascination for that promise o' the mountain shifting into the sea gin he had faith. He thought it would be a fine exemplification o' the power o' God. And as he stoppit in a town where there was a great muckle mountain like at the back o' the town, and the sea maybe the matter o' a mile and a half or twa mile frae the foot o' the mountain, thinks he, 'It would be fine gin yon mountain was to shift into the sea just because I had faith in God.' So he lays his plans, and as he gangs to his bed ae night he says to himsel', 'Yon mountain'll be choking up the sea' (for the sea wasna desperate wide where he stoppit) 'afore ever I rise in the mornin'.' But when he gets up the morn's morn, and looks awa' to the east (it was a wee shade to the north o' east), there's no nae word o' the mountain incommoding the sea,

and he was some dismayed. But bairns is bairns and distresses dinna distress them lang, the first fresh thing that diverts them drives their ideas out o' their heads. And when he was telling me a' about it he says, 'It was just as weel the mountain hadna shifted into the sea, for it would hae caused a heap o' disconvenience the way the sea was so circumscribed yonder.' And says he, 'Sandy, I wasna nae mair than a bairn, and it was a bairn's faith. I didna shift yon mountain, and the Almighty didna shift it to me, but mony a time sin' syne I've haen mair muckle mountains that had to be shifted out o' my road to meet my day's requirements, and the Almighty He's shifted them to me.' Says he, 'As time gaed by I had got that mony mountains shifted out o' my road it was making me some heedless kind, and no so prudent-like in my ways as folk should be, for I aye thought, in whatsoever mess I land mysel' the Almighty'll see me out o' it. So syne it behoved the Almighty to leave some muckle mountains fair on my road afore me and no to shift them to me. And,' says he, 'I'm gratefu' and mair than gratefu' for a' the anes He shifted to me, but the thing I thank Him maist for is that He ca'd a halt and didna shift some to me, so as to put a check on my heedlessness.' Ay, that was James Manson tell'd me that, as cautious-gaun a man as ye would meet.

"That's what ye'll get gin ye hae faith and doubt not—'What things soever ye desire.' Ye'll hae sic answers to your prayers that ye'll be fair terrified."

"What way would we be terrified wi' getting answers to our prayers?" said Dave.

"What way would ye be terrified? This is like the way o' it. Satan kens his trade, and gin folk

be aye praying and aye getting answers, it spoils his trade, so as soon as ye get some right braw answer to your prayer, says Satan to ye, 'Ye'll be gaun to dee, for folk dinna get answers o' that kind gin they be to be spared.' As like as no ye believe him, and ye're terrified to seek for mair. But gin so be ye resist him he'll awa' on anither tack and tell ye there's something uncommon fine about ye, or ye wouldna get your prayers heard. I ken mysel' when I've gotten some right braw answer to my prayers I'll think a muckle deal o' mysel'. I mind ae day I had some gey pressing requirement, and the Almighty He sent me the answer. And syne I says to mysel', 'It's no a'budy gets their prayers heard like me; I maun be an uncommon fine variety o' a Christian to get my prayers heard like that.' And it was the time there was a right fancy variety o' a rose that was taking the prizes at a' the shows, the 'real Sandy Rodger' they ca'd it, so I says to mysel', 'I maun be a "real Sandy Rodger" variety o' a Christian or I wouldna get my prayers heard that way,' and I keepit my head gey high. But as I was coming in frae the well—ye ken yon big stane that lies half-roads atwixt my door and the well, where a body's aye apt to skail water gin their pail be fu'. Weel, I ken the stane as weel as I ken mysel', but the way I was haudin' my head that high and thinking that muckle o' mysel', I didna look to my feet and I gaed sprawl, the pitcher ae way and mysel' the tither. I put forrit my hands to save my face, and there wasnae permanent damage. But I was still in the 'real Sandy Rodger' frame o' mind, and I says some shaip to mysel', 'That stane should hae been shifted out o' that and no be endangering the lives o' Christian folk that canna weel be spared.' But

I cries back to mysel', 'Na, that stane'll no be shifted' (aforesyne it had aye been my intention to hae it shifted), 'that stane'll get leave to bide, for I sees there's a usefu'ness in it; and as for the "real Sandy Rodger" variety o' Christians, they can as weel be spared as ither folk. And what's mair,' I says, 'the next time ye haud your head up that high I'll no put out a hand to save ye, but let ye fa' on your face.'

"And syne I was sair, sair vexed wi' mysel' that I had conduc't mysel' that way, and after a' the Master's kindness to me; and when Satan sees that, says he, 'Ye needna seek nae mair answers to your prayers after vain-glorious conduc' o' that kind; ye may keep your prayers to yoursel' for a twel'month ony way.' But I says, 'Na, it wasna on account o' my conduc' the Almighty heard my prayers, it was for the sake o' the Lord Jesus, and there's been nae alteration in Him. And I'm awa' to seek for mair.'

"'Senseless craitur',' says Satan, but I didna heed him.

"Gin ye hae faith and doubt not ye'll get your answers, and when ye've gotten your answers Satan'll hae some transactions wi' ye to seek to hinder ye frae getting mair. But the Almighty He teaches our hands to war and our fingers to fight, and He doesna teach Satan, so we hae aye the best o' it."

THIS IS NO THE MORN YET

"**T**HAT had been a right throng prayer meeting," said Sandy, after we had read the 12th chapter of Acts, "for many were gathered thegither praying. And they had been real eager to get their answer, for they stoppit up a' night at it.

"The Apostle Peter he's in the jail, and a' the Christian folk hae been praying constant that he might be set free. But there's no nae word o' that, for Herod, instead o' setting him free, is to hae him beheaded the morn. So the folk hae to consider the case or they see what's to be done. They canna do wantin' Peter, but they've prayed and prayed and prayed, and never a bit o' difference. Peter's aye in the jail, and things is waur than ever, for Herod's to bring him forth the morn, and a'body kens what that means.

"Says ane o' the folk, 'It's plain to me that Peter's no to be spared, for we've prayed constant for him, and never the shade o' an answer. We canna do nae mair, for a' the arrangements is made and he's to be beheaded the morn.'

"Says anither, 'But this is no the morn yet, we've time for a good puckle prayer atwixt this and the morn, and I would be for suggesting that gin Mark's mother be agreeable, for her room has a heap o' accommodation, we mak' arrangements

for a haill night o' prayer. We canna do wantin' Peter, for he has aye to bear the brunt o' a'thing, and I'll no gie up hope o' him yet. I'm for a haill night o' prayer.'

"'And me,' says anither.

"'And me,' cries various o' them. And as they're maistly o' the same mind their arrangements is made. Syne somebody would speir, 'Is it just to be men-folk at the meeting?' But Mary, the mother o' Mark, she would cry, 'Na; it maun be men-folk and women-folk and bairns, a'boddy that's eager for Peter. There maunna be a toom seat the night.'

"Syne the man that tak's the lead, he would point out that they had a' the requirements for success in their prayer—they had a definite object, the deliverance o' Peter; they were a' o' the ae mind that they couldna do wanting Peter, they believed in the power o' the Almighty, and they sought it in the name o' the Master. And gin Peter be to be spared he'll hae to be delivered the night, so that'll circumscribe their loquaciousness, and put pith into their prayer. It's the night or never.

"So Peter he's in the jail, and four quaternions o' sodgers set to keep watch o' him. I've been terrified a' my days for thae quaternions o' sodgers. I aye thought they was sic a quantity, but when I gets a sight o' Tom's new Bible I lights upon them, and ye wouldna believe, a quaternion isna nae mair than four;—ay, ye may weel look!—and the haill four quaternions was just four sets o' four; ilka set would hae a sax hours' shift, and syne anither quaternion would tak' their place. I thinks to mysel', that's a lesson to me no to be owre sair terrified wi' the names o' things, for I aye thought a quaternion couldna be nae less than a

hunderd, when a' the time they werena but four ; so when folk tell me there's a haill quaternion o' trouble afore me I dinna owre muckle distress mysel' or I see the size o' it. But the worst thing wi' Peter is this, that's he's chained to twa o' the quaternion, ane o' them at his east side and ane o' them at the west, and the tither twa's at the door. But still he fa's owre asleep ; the very circumstance o' the quaternion hanging on to his arms doesna hinder him sleeping.

"Syne in the middle o' the night an angel o' the Lord comes ben and gies him a nudge on the side, and bids him haste and rise up. And gin he had been wide awake he might hae said, 'But there's thae twa bits o' this quaternion chained to my very banes so that I canna rise.' But, as he's no right waukin', he doesna think upon that, and as he commences to rise his chains slacken and drop fair off clean owre his hands. Syne the angel bids him dress and on wi' his boots, but as he's some slow and drowsy like he has to put him in mind o' his jacket, and syne he gangs to the door and bids him follow. Syne they makes their way to the muckle iron gate o' the town, and gin Peter had been right awake he might hae said, 'This'll be a job, for naething but its ain key'll turn the lock o' that gate.' But this muckle iron gate it has mair sense than some folk, for when it sees them coming it doesna wait but opens o' its ain accord. I'm thinking it had been ane o' the gates the angel had opened a whiley afore (Acts v. 19), when he took the apostles out ; so when it sees the angel and Peter coming, it doesna wait to be forced, for thae iron gates is a heap mair supple than folk.

"Syne the angel bids good-night to Peter and leaves him a' his lane. And Peter he wakens up

and rubs his een, and when he sees where he is he kens he's no been dreaming. But the job is to ken how to do now. It's no the time o' day for visiting friends, but when he considers a wee he minds upon Mary the mother o' Mark, how that her house was aye open to them that was friends wi' the Master. He kens fine it winna anger her, though she has to rouse frae her sleep. So he chaps at the door o' the gate, and ye would think a sma' bit gate like this at the house o' Christian folk wouldna be beat by that muckle irreligious gate that belonged to the town. But na, this gate doesna stir, for it's no aye the gates that mak's the maist profession that moves the readiest, so Peter he has to chap.

"A bit lassie at the meeting runs forrit to speir 'Wha's there?' And when Peter cries back, 'It's me,' she doesna open, honest body, for it's owre good news to keep or she tak' time to loosen the latch, but she runs back ben as fast as her feet'll carry her, and though she's out o' breath wi' running she cries out loud afore them a', 'Here's Peter here. Our prayers is heard. Hosannah to the Son o' David!' But the folk at the meeting they're no the excitable kind o' folk ye'll see at some meetings, and they cry back to the lassie, 'You're daft, lassie, you're daft (verse 15). How can it be Peter when he's chained to that quaternion, ane o' them at his east side and ane o' them at the west, and the tither twa at the door? Na, lassie, thae late meetings isna good for young folk, ye should hae been in your bed. Na, it's no Peter,'

"'It is so,' cries the lassie.

"'It is not,' cry the folk.

"'It is so,' cries the lassie.

"'It is not,' cry the folk, and awa' they argy.

"Says the lassie, 'I thought we was praying for Peter.'

"Say the folk, 'It's ae thing, lassie, to pray for Peter and anither to lose haud o' your senses. Do ye no ken, lassie, that Peter's chained wi' iron chains?'

"Says the lassie, 'I ken that fine, but iron chains is a heap easier slackened than the set ideas o' some folk.' Leastways she would be like to say that, but it wouldna hae been good manners, so says she, 'Can the Almighty no loose iron chains?'

"Cry the folk, 'Lassie, ye let your ideas run awa' wi' ye. It's no that the Almighty canna loose iron chains if needs be, but that's no His way o' working.'

"Says the lassie, 'And am I to leave Peter standing there? That's him chapping again.'

"Says ane o' the folk, 'Ay, I should ken that chap, it's the very marrow o' Peter's, for there's aye a kind o' a rattle wi' it. But I'll gie ye the explanation. It'll be Peter's angel, and it's meant to be an encouragement til us. I'll just gie ye ane or twa remarks on the philosophy o' angels, and that'll pass the time.'

"Says the lassie to hersel', 'Philosophy o' angels or no, it's heartless work leaving Peter standing there.'

"And ane o' the auld wives would converse wi' the lassie's mother and say, 'Janet, woman, that lassie should hae been in her bed; it doesna do for young folk to gang to late prayer meetings. Her head's fair turned wi' her being up so late. And, Janet, ye mind, I was aye agin her being ca'd Rhoda, for it's a fancy name, and the like o' that aye gars folk tak' up wi' fancies.'

"And yet that bit lassie wi' the fancy name is

the only ane in a' the meeting that's ready to believe that God has heard their prayer. But as Peter keeps on chapping a heap o' them gang to the door, and they dinna ken what to think when they see him standing there. They're like to speir, 'What hae ye done wi' your quaternion? Where's your iron chains?' and a heap o' havers o' that description. But Peter he says, 'Wheesht! wheesht!' And syne he explains how the Almighty had sent His angel and set him free.

"We would be near like to cry, 'Ye're fine hands ye for a prayer meeting, prayin' a' night for Peter and winna believe when he's at the door!' But folk that bides in a glass house shouldna commence to throw stanes at their neebors, and gin thae folk had a sight o' ye and me at a time they weel might cry, 'Fine hands ye for a prayer meeting!'

"I've kent folk pray for this or that and no believe when they got their answer. And gin they couldna deny but their answer had come, they're a great heap waur than thae friends o' Peter's, for they'll tell ye it's come accidental like, or they'll cry to themsel's, 'I'm feared it's sent as a judgment,' for folk winna believe in the goodness o' heart o' the Almighty. King David was aye wont to praise God because He was good, but we winna believe He's good. We believe He's holy and just and righteous, that He's good that way. But that wasna King David's idea. Ye'll hear folk cry to their neebor, 'That's real good o' ye to hae done that for me.' And that's what King David's after, it's the goodness o' heart o' the Almighty that aye astonishes him. Says he, 'Has He done a' this to me? That's real good o' God. Praise Him, for He's real good.'

"Oh, that we could aince believe that He's set His love upon us, that He's taen a fancy to us, as a body might say, that the Father Himsel' loveth us, and that it's His good pleasure to gie us the kingdom and a' the things that's in the kingdom. Dinna be saucy as though ye werena seeing Him there wi' His hands fu' wi' a' good things. And gin it be a pleasure to Him to gie, let Him hae pleasure for aince."

We sang the 107th Psalm, and got so into the spirit of it we didn't notice the time, and were quite surprised when Jamie Stewart shouted, "The hour's chappit five minutes syne!" Sandy took the hint, but after Jamie had left the most of us lingered on. We agreed with Tom when he said, "Thae clocks is desperate mechanical!" And when he suggested that we should stay and finish the Psalm not one of us objected. We began again at the beginning—

"Praise God, for He is good : for still
His mercies lasting be ;
Let God's redeem'd say so, whom He
From th' en'my's hand did free."

And you should have heard us as again and again we came upon the lines—

"O that men to the Lord would give
Praise for His goodness then,
And for His works of wonder done
Unto the sons of men !"

It may not have been good singing, but it was genuine praise. And some of us still at a time praise God not only for all He has done for us, but because He is "real good."

THE PROOF O' THE PUDDING

"THERE was a chap got into an argument wi' me," said Dave Paterson, "that insisted wi' me that there wasna nae need for the Apostle Paul to hae become converted. He said that the like o' Paul that had aye kept the law, that had aye been good-living, that had aye been religious, would hae got into heaven fine, though he hadna been converted, and I didna mak' a great job o' an answer to him."

"It's a pity ye hadna got the Apostle Paul to answer him himsel'," said Sandy, "he would hae laid it down plain."

"But the Apostle Paul wasna at hand."

"The Apostle Paul should aye be at hand in a body's memory."

"Weel, this chap said there wasna a fau't to find wi' Paul when he was Saul o' Tarsus, that he was desperate religious, that he didna spare himsel' for the cause o' God, and that there wasna naething ye could charge him wi'. And syne he speired at me as to what could I bring agin' his character and conduc'. And when I said that character and conduc' wasna just a'thing, he said a'boddy kent that the proof o' the pudding was the preein' o' it."

"Ay, lad," said Sandy, "the proof o' the pudding's the preein' o' it, but gin the pudding hae a' good

qualities and yet be that hard that ye canna get your teeth into it, it's no a good pudding, and gin I'm no mista'en the Apostle Paul when he was Saul o' Tarsus was as hard as the nether mill-stone. But the first fau't I would find wi' Saul o' Tarsus was that he hadna submitted to the Master."

"I pointed that out to the chap," said Dave, "but he said that that was just a distinction o' doctrine, that it didna bring ony blemish on Saul's character or conduc'."

"A distinction o' doctrine, lad! A distinction o' doctrine is whiles a' that lies atwixt them that's in the jail and them that isna. The ane says it's a sin to steal, the tither doesna, that's what a distinction o' doctrine does. And, Dave, ye nor me havena been to foreign parts, but gin we believe the newspapers, there is countries where some o' the folk hae conspiracies agin' their king; and by a' that I hear, it's no aye them that bears the worst characters that has the chief hand in it. Now, suppose ye that some decent, steady, hard-working man, that ye couldna pick a fau't wi', was among thae conspirators, and went deliberate' and killed the son o' the king, would he be to blame?"

"Nae mistak' but he would be to blame, and he would ken that fast enough, for they would hang him afore twa days was owre."

"But, Dave, gin he was a decent, respectable, hard-working man, that they couldna bring a charge agin'?"

"It was plenty charge that he had killed the son o' the king."

"But, Dave, surely that wouldna be ony blemish on his character or conduc'. It wasna that he had lost his temper, or done it for robbery, but had done it like on principle."

"The mair shame to him, and the less leniency would he get," said Dave.

"But gin he was an honest, peaceable, law-abiding man, Dave? Ye're surely no minding that."

"I dinna ken your notions o' law-abiding, Sandy, but I ken it's no my notions to ca' them law-abiding that murders their king's son."

"Dinna distress yoursel', Dave, for ye and me are o' the ae mind. And the God o' heaven, the King o' a' kings, doesna ca' them law-abiding that winna submit to His Son. They're a' His subjec's, they bide in His country, and they maun keep His laws, and the very first o' His laws is, that a' men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father. That's the first fau't I would find wi' Saul o' Tarsus, that he hadna submitted to the Master. As he says himsel', he had a zeal o' God, but not according to knowledge, he was ignorant o' God's righteousness, and gaun about to establish his ain righteousness hadna submitted to the righteousness o' God. That was his foremaist fau't, that he hadna submitted himsel'."

"Is submission ane o' the graces?" said Jamie Stewart.

"I dinna ken whether it be ane o' the graces or no," said Sandy, "but I ken it's the first step on the road to heaven. And Saul o' Tarsus wouldna submit to the Lord Jesus, so he wasna a law-abiding subjec' o' the God o' heaven."

"And does respectability and self-sacrifice like his no gang for naething?"

"Here's what the Scriptur' says, lad, 'If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain' (Gal. ii. 21). Gin righteousness come by good conduc', gin righteousness come by respecta-

bility, gin righteousness come by self-sacrifice, then Christ is dead in vain."

"That's putting it gey strong."

"Ay, lad, it's gey strong, but it isna stronger than the Scriptur'. Dinna tak' my word for it, but see what the Scriptur' says, for by the works o' the law shall no flesh be justified" (Gal. ii. 16).

"I aye thought self-sacrifice was worth a heap."

"A' thae things is worth muckle gin ye hae the Lord Jesus first; but Satan would sacrifice himsel' ony day gin he could gain his ain ends by it, and so would plenty folk, and heaps o' them are busy at it. Folk'll sacrifice onything sooner nor submit to the Master. And they maun hae a gey high opeenion o' themsel's gin they think the sacrifice o' themsel's can tak' awa' sin, for the very Old Testament sacrifices had to be wi'out blemish, and they canna claim even that."

"The like o' that doctrine gangs terrible agin' the grain wi' some folk," said Geordie Smart.

"But that's the fau't o' the grain, lad. The very grain o' our inmost natur' a' lies the wrong way, and naething a body can do'll mend it; it maun a' be taen out and a new natur' putten in, and folk dinna like the idea o' that."

"The chap that was cracking wi' me," said Dave, "said it fair took the backbane out o' a body gin he was high-minded and had good principles, to hae to submit to the Lord Jesus, and no hae himsel' to fa' back upon."

"Ay, lad, it tak's the backbane out, and it's just as weel, for a backbane hinders a body. Folk maun hae the backbane out or they winna submit to the God o' heaven; and folk that hae themsel's to fa' back upon winna fa' back upon the God o' heaven. Saul o' Tarsus didna submit

to the Lord Jesus till the backbane was out o' him. He couldna hae fa'en fair on his face to the ground afore Him had the backbane no been out. But as soon as ever it was awa' he commences to speir, 'Lord, what wilt Thou hae me to do?' And it isna nane but His servants speirs at Him that, for ye never heard tell o' Pharasaical folk speirin' that. They think they aye ken best how to do, and if they dinna ken they're no willing to be tell'd by God or man. They haena human natur', they haena Divine natur', they arena living men wi' flesh and blood. That was aye the fau't o' the law, that it couldna put life into folk. If there had been a law gien which could hae gien life, verily righteousness would hae been by the law (Gal. iii. 21), but it couldna gie life, so thae folk are dead, dead as a door-nail, and it's near about time they kent it. They're no nae better than a stuccy figur'. No nae better! I needna say that, for I could put up wi' a stuccy figur', but I couldna put up wi' them. They're but bond-servants at the best, and what saith the Scriptur'? 'Cast out the bond-woman and her son, for the son o' the bond-woman shall no be heir wi' the son o' the free-woman' (Gal. iv. 30), so they winna win in to heaven amang God's ain bairns, for they arena bairns but slaves. There's aye a repugnance about them, for the self-conceit is sax inch through; they hae a veneer o' some things, but no o' self-conceit, it's solid frae side to side. And gin folk hae that repugnance at them, do ye think the Almighty has less? He has mair patience wi' them, and mair pity for them, but He doesna like their ways ae grain better. The proof o' the pudding's the preein' o' it, but gin naebody'll look near hand the pudding I ken the pudding isna good.

“Ye mind the Master spake a parable to certain which trusted in themsel’s that they were righteous and despised others. And o’ a’ the things that folk should trust in, the very hindmaist should be themsel’s. Folk haena made the acquaintance o’ themsel’s or they wouldna trust in themsel’s, and folk haena made the acquaintance o’ themsel’s or they wouldna despise others. The spirit o’ man is the candle o’ the Lord, searching a’ the inward parts, and when folk commences to search themsel’s they loss conceit o’ themsel’s. And as for yon Pharisee in the parable, ye would hae thought there was maybe a wee grain o’ good in him when he commences to gie thanks, but there wasna. Says he, ‘I’ve gey reason to be thankfu’ that I’m a heap better than maist o’ folk.’

“Na, ye Pharisee chap, na. Ye haena reason to be thankfu’ ava, and gin ye get a sight o’ your inmost sel’ it’ll no be thankfu’ness that’s the matter wi’ ye.

“The Master says the Pharisees does the sma’ things but omits the weightier matters o’ the law, and a body’s aye apt to forget what thae weightier matters is. Do ye mind them, Dave, the weightier matters o’ the law?”

“No, I dinna just mind.”

“Judgment, mercy, and faith (Matt. xxiii. 23). Ye wouldna think faith was ane o’ the weightier matters o’ the law, ye wouldna think it had ony connection wi’ the law ava, but that’s what the Master says. And I some think I ken the reason o’ it—that folk maun be dependent upon God, for He canna put up wi’ independent folk; and thae Pharasaical folk are aye independent, and the publicans and harlots win in to heaven afore them (Matt. xxi. 31).

"No, I couldna sympathize wi' Pharisee folk, but gin the Apostle Paul was to gang by the road I would be owre the hedge in twa seconds to seek for a grip o' his hand. I would hae him down to the house gin he wasna desperate hurried, to hear a' his news, and I would be speirin' heaps o' things. I would be like to ask at him, 'Had ye no nae compunctions commencing to sing yon night in the jail afore a' the prisoners when they couldna escape frae listenin' to ye? It was like forcing your ain ideas upon them, and interfering wi' the liberty o' the subjec'.'

"'My ain ideas!' Paul would say. 'My ain ideas isna worth a saxpence. Gin they were my ain ideas I wouldna pay nae attention to them, but they're the Almighty's ideas, and a'boddy has to ken His mind. And as for the liberty o' the subjec', says Paul, 'thae subjec's had a heap mair liberty after our Psalms was sung than afore, for a'boddy's chains was loosed. There's naething like praise for slackening chains.'

"Ay, a'boddy has a repugnance at Pharisees, but I'm thinking this, that supposin' the Apostle Paul and Saul o' Tarsus were to hold an argument in ane o' the kirks folk would be keen to gang. And afore the affair commenced a'boddy would be crying that they held wi' the Apostle. And when they've heard a' that Saul o' Tarsus has to say their opeenions wouldna be shifted. But when the Apostle gets up and says, 'God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross o' our Lord Jesus Christ,' they would hang down their heads. And when he says, 'I count a' things but loss for the excellency o' the knowledge o' Christ Jesus my Lord,' they would be awfu' disappointed wi' him aye boasting o' Another and no o' himsel'. And when

he gets fair excited and cries, 'We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God,' they would loss their conceit o' Paul, talking as though they had to be reconciled. And as they gang hame they would cry, 'It wasna a great meeting, Paul wasna at his best the day!'

"Ay, that's folk. For wi' a' their scunner at Pharisees, folk is Pharisees yet."

GRASSHOPPERS

"GRASSHOPPERS! grasshoppers! grasshoppers!" said Sandy. "'We were in our ain sight as grasshoppers' (Num. xiii. 33). Thae folk maun hae been o' the right sort that were in their ain sight as grasshoppers for it doesna occur to maist o' folk to think that they're but grasshoppers. Folk'll aye tell ye humility's fine, leastways for ither folk to hae, for a'boday sees that a'boday ither is in desperate want o' humility. But thae folk here hae gotten it, real grand humility o' the very best description, for ye hear them cry, 'We were in our ain sight as grasshoppers.' Ay, we'll keep watch on thae folk, for they're the kind ye canna get nowadays.

"Grasshoppers! grasshoppers! grasshoppers! sma' bit craitur's o' grasshoppers, they couldna hae described themsel's better. Ay, there'll be some pleasure in conversing wi' them, for ye're no needing aye to check their boastfu'ness; ye ken fine they winna blaw, for naeboday heard tell o' grasshoppers blawing. I dinna ken gin grasshoppers be possessed o' many qualifications or no, but I ken this, that they can crack, for they're aye making some remark or another, gin the weather be suitable.

"So we'll commence and question them—'Ye

grasshopper folk, it would be a great obligement gin ye would tell us a' your experiences.'

"Says the grasshopper folk—' We was sent on a great expedition by Moses to examine a' the Promised Land, and see what it was like, and what the folk was like, and whether we would be fit to fight them, and syne to report on a' thing.'

"Oho,' we cry, ' that was a great errand ; and afore ye mak' a start wi' your report we would be some curious to ken what yon affair was that ye was carrying.'

"Them's grapes,' says the grasshopper folk, 'and if ye step in owre ye'll get a look o' them.'

"There isna but ten o' the grasshopper folk ; there had been twal', but twa o' them wasna grasshoppers, so they wandered awa'. But the anes that remains cries out to twa o' their band, maybe it would be to Shammua and Shaphat (*vv.* 4, 5).

"See here, Shammua and Shaphat, lift up thae grapes the way ye had them afore, and let thae gentlemen see them.' And as they hoists them up upon a staff thae grapes is a sight to see.

"How many clusters do ye count upon that branch ?' we would speir.

"Clusters?' cries Shaphat, 'there isna but the ae cluster.' And syne they cry to Shammua to haud his end o' the staff a wee shadey higher that we may get a right sight o' it a'.

"They're fair fabulous,' we cry.

"They are so,' says Shammua.

"Ay, they're no that bad,' says Shaphat.

"And syne we would speir, 'Was there mair like that, or was them exceptional ?'

"Exceptional ! Ilka cluster we see'd was exceptional. The place was covered wi' them.'

"It maun be a gey rich soil.'

“‘Terrible,’ cries Shammua. ‘It’s like a fine rich loam o’ a reddish-brown colour, fine and easy to work.’

“‘But it’ll burn in the summer time?’

“‘No, man, no,’ says Shammua, ‘I never see’d better land. I pokit my staff in an inch or twa, and it was moist in ablow. And there’s a right depth o’ soil, for I paid attention at ae place where they had been making some excavations, and I’m positeeve there was near twa feet o’ that loam afore ye come on the sub-soil.’

“‘And what about ither crops? Do they tak’ wi’ the soil and the climate, or is it just the grapes?’

“‘A’thing tak’s wi’ it,’ says Shaphat. ‘The only fau’t we could find was that, wi’ that weight o’ crops, it’ll be a job to get a’thing gathered in.’

“‘We could put up wi’ that fau’t.’

“‘Ay,’ says Shaphat, ‘a’body could put up wi’ that fau’t. A’thing was there as the Almighty had promised, and a gey heap mair.’

“‘And their towns?’

“‘Ay, that was the worst o’ it,’ says Shaphat, ‘I never see’d better defended towns. I dinna ken what variety o’ lime they work wi’, but it mak’s solid wa’s; naething could knock them down, for ye couldna find a chink to get your pick in, and the stanes was fair adamant.’

“‘Would ye hae ony chance to win in at their gates?’

“‘Na,’ says Shaphat, ‘na. Thae folk are owre wide-awake for that, and I never see’d gates o’ the same description. It’s some new patent they’ve gotten, and a body couldna force them.’

“‘Eh, man! But the folk they winna hae a great deal o’ spunk?’

“‘Spunk!’ cries Shaphat. ‘Spunk isna the

word for it; I never see'd folk to match them. I haena seen the man yet that could fight thae folk. The Amalakites was yonder.'

" 'Never!'

" 'They was so,' says Shaphat, 'and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, the Amorites, and the Canaanites.'

" 'Eh, man!'

" 'Ay,' says Shaphat, 'but that's no the worst, for to tell ye the truth the sons o' Anak was there, ten feet ten in their stocking soles, and awfu' fearsome to look at. I haena got owre the sight o' them yet. They just lookit down on us wi' a species o' superciliousness, as if we was naebody, as if we was less than naebody, and we've no been used wi' that. Mind ye, we was a' the heads o' the tribes o' Israel, the very pick o' ilka tribe. The like o' ye wouldna ken, but Shammua here was the head o' Reuben, and me, I was the head o' Simeon, and the lave o' us, a' the heads o' our tribes. We was aye in the way o' getting respec', but thae giants had just a right disdain for us. "We were in our ain sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight" (v. 33). I never felt that sma'.' And Shaphat commences to greet.

" 'Man, that's distressfu' news, and a' the mair when it was sic a grand country.'

" 'It's no the country that's wrong,' says Shaphat in the midst o' his greetin'. 'It's the folk we arena fit to face, and—and,' says he, 'we winna try it.' And he's off to his greetin' again.

" 'I never heard tell o' grasshoppers greetin' afore, nor making complaints that they werena sufficient respec'it. I didna ken they expec'it respec'; and I'm just some feared they arena a right variety o' grasshopper.

" 'But as we're considerin' a' their news, and

vexing oursel's wi' their distresses, we fa's in wi' twa men on the road. The ane o' them he's Caleb the son o' Jephunneh, and the tither's Joshua the son o' Nun. And when we've said 'A fine day' to them, we canna but say, 'That's maist awfu' disappointin' news.'

"'Whatna news?' says Caleb.

"'About the Promised Land.'

"'There isna a fau't wi' it,' says Caleb.

"'We ken that, but it's that that mak's it a' the mair disappointin', that ye canna owrecome the folk.'

"'The folk!' says Caleb, 'we can owrecome them fine (v. 30). Joshua and me was there and see'd a' thing.'

"'And was thae great muckle terrifying giants no there?'

"'I believe they was,' says Caleb.

"'And did ye no notice nae Amalakites?'

"'Yes, I see'd them in the south.'

"'And Jebusites?'

"'Ay, they was yonder.'

"'And Amorites?'

"'Plenty o' them.'

"'And Hittites?'

"'That's their headquarters, man, awa' up in the hills.'

"'And Canaanites?'

"'Ay, down by the sea.'

"'And what way are ye no discouraged?'

"'There isna nae cause for discouragement.'

"'Caleb, man, are ye wyss enough?'

"'As far as I ken I'm wyss enough. Joshua and me see'd a' thing as weel as the tither ten, and we're a' o' the ae mind as to what we see'd. We see'd a land that couldna be beat, and we see'd

folk that wouldna be beaten, but Joshua and me see'd the God o' heaven, and Joshua says to me:—

““ Here's a question to ye, Caleb, ye that's a scholar. Gin the Amalakites, the Hittites, the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, and thae great muckle giants, the children o' Anak, fight on the tae side, and the God o' heaven on the tither side, whatna side'll hae the victory?” And I didna answer Joshua, for I think he kent the answer fine.’

“Syne somebody cries, ‘That's a' true, Caleb, and naebody doubts that gin the God o' heaven was to fight thae folk He would bring utter destruction upon them. But ye're like to forget that it's us that's the hindrance, that we hae a' human infirmities, that we would be yonder wi' Him, and that that would hinder His success. It's no as if God was fighting His lane, but He has us wi' Him, and it's no beneficial for us to hae success in a' things. We maunna run rash into danger, and I'm o' the same mind as Shaphat there and his friends that it wouldna consist wi' prudence to gang to fight thae folk.’

“Says Caleb, ‘We hae the promise o' God that He'll gang wi' us, and if it isna prudent to gang wi' Him I dinna ken what prudence is. Ye mind how He said His presence would gang wi' us, and He would gie us rest’ (Ex. xxxiii. 14). But the folk they dinna pay heed to Caleb, and they greet to the tune o' prudence. The Promised Land was the grandest land in a' the worl'; but thae folk didna win in to it, because they thought a grasshopper was owre weighty a weight for the Almighty to carry.

“And o' a' the things that vexes the Almighty, there isna naething vexes Him waur than when

we winna believe He's fit to carry us, when we winna believe He's fit to set us right, and fit to set a' that concerns us right. Ye mind the Psalm says that the Lord was wroth wi' the folk because they believed not in God and trusted not in His salvation, because they limited the Holy One o' Israel (Ps. lxxviii.). And there isna naething grieves Him mair than when we set limits on what He's fit to do for us, when we cry, 'He did that for us, but He canna do this. He did this for us, but He canna do that. He could hae put us a' right had we gone to Him sooner, but no now. It's owre late now.' Or when we commence and cry, 'He can help ither folk, but He canna help me.' For that's limiting the Holy One o' Israel, and it's that that hinders Him working.

"Ye mind the Almighty was terrible disappointed wi' His folk when, after they had vexed Him sair, and He had bid them come back and He would set them a' right, they cried, 'Na, there isna no hope' (Jer. xviii. 12); and when they cried another time, 'There isna no hope, na, for I hae loved strangers, and after them will I go' (Jer. ii. 25). They wouldna let Him set them right, and it was that that vexed Him. I ken folk hae wandered far enough, and ta'en up wi' the worst o' strangers, there isna twa ways as to that; but however so far ye hae wandered awa' dinna, dinna say that there isna no hope so long as there's breath in your body, dinna set limits on the power and the good-will o' the Almighty. So far as concerns your soul's salvation dinna describe limits to God, and so far as concerns your body's well-being dinna set limits on God, so far as concerns your daily bread and your ord'nar' concerns o' life dinna set limits on God, so far as concerns

your folk and your friends dinna set limits on God, and so far as concerns the sairest matter o' a'—when a body has been acquainted wi' God and wandered back, it's the painfulest case in a' the worl', but dinna, dinna set limits that He doesna set, believe yet in His salvation. There isna a sairer sin in a' the Scriptur' than no to believe He'll set things right gin ye mak' application to Him. And naebody doubts the Almighty can do a'thing, but the thing that beats folk is—Can He do a'thing when He has me wi' Him?

“Oh, ye grasshopper folk, ye maun hae a maist uncommon high conception o' your ain abilities gin ye think ye can hinder the Almighty. He winna work agin' your will, but gin ye be willing for Him to work ye'll no be a hindrance to Him. ‘We're weel able to owrecome,’ says Caleb; and the Apostle John says the very same. Caleb says it o' the Promised Land, but the Apostle says it o' a'thing. But folk maun haud firm their confidence in God, and the rejoicin' o' the hope firm, firm to the end. Dinna slacken your haud o' hope nae matter what befa', for we're saved by hope, and it's it that mak's us no shamefaced. But hope maun aye hae rejoicin' wi' it. For I ken this, that gin thae chemical folk was to examine into a sample pound o' hope, and find there wasna fifteen ounces or mair o' rejoicin' to the saxteen ounces o' hope, they couldna ca' it first-quality hope, they couldna set their seal upon it. And, mind ye, the market's fair flooded wi' haill cargoes o' poor-quality hope, soft, fusionless, ill-coloured, sprouted hope, that hasna got nae strength into it. Folk'll whiles tell ye they hae hope in God when it's a maist sorrowfu' description o' hope they hae, it's that sprouted hope gin it be hope ava, a body would

need their glasses on or ever they kent it was meant for hope.

“But rejoicin’ hope is a real braw thing. I whiles think rejoicin’ is like a fine new besom, for it gars the dust flee awa’. The dust o’ doubt, the dust o’ disbelief, and the dust o’ depression a’ flees afore it. A’body kens how to sweep wi’ a besom. Ye maunna just shove or trail your besom across the floor or ye’ll no mak’ a job o’ the dust; but wi’ short, shairp strokes o’ your besom the dust doesna linger long. I ken there’s a species o’ dust that would very near need a damp clout, and depression’s that sort o’ a dust, for it’s like to cling to a body; but gie ye short, shairp strokes o’ rejoicin’ and ye’ll mak’ an uncommon odds. Doubt’ll gang, disbelief’ll gang, and gin depression doesna just a’thegether gang it’ll be a’ in streaks, a’ streakit through wi’ rejoicin’, and after another turn or twa, ye’ll no notice muckle remainin’.

“And gin we would but mind whenever we sees a grasshopper, or when we hears them chirpin’, that a grasshopper canna defeat the Almighty, canna as much as hinder Him workin’, we’ll hae learned a gey big lesson.”

SEE AYE AND HAE A'THING SNOD

I CANNA mak' out Zacchæus," said Sandy, "I aye wonder at him that he didna hesitate when the Master said He would just gang hame to his house wi' him (Luke xix. 5). For, mind ye, he wouldna be expec'ing Him aforehand, and Mistress Zacchæus she wouldna be expec'ing Him, and things wouldna just be extra snod, and what was waur, a'thing wouldna be circumspec'. Things wouldna be as folk would wish for the Master to see. Some things would hae to be hidden awa', some things would hae to be set back a bit, and some things would hae to be brought forrit a bit, afore ye would wish the Master ben. And gin I had been Zacchæus I would hae been like to ask at the Master, whether the morn wouldna be as suitable a day for Him to come? And if that wouldna suit, and He was to come that very same day, I would hae sought out the fleetest lad that was yonder, and cried to him, 'Haste ye now and awa' to Mistress Zacchæus and let her ken that the Master's coming, and bid her hae a'thing circumspec'.' Syne I would hae endeavoured to arrange so as the Master would be detained a wee whiley, that the folk at hame might hae time to hae things in order. But Zacchæus had mair sense than me, for no sooner did the Master say He was coming

than he made Him welcome, and mair than welcome. He didna seek to hinder Him, and he didna send notice to Mistress Zacchæus, but he stops aside the Master, and brings Him hame wi' him. He kens it'll be an awkward business for Him to see a'thing just as it stands, but he has sense to ken that it'll be a heap mair awkward for Him no to see it just as it stands. For gin ye hide things awa' when ye ken the Master's coming ye're aye apt to bring them forrit again as soon as ever He's awa'."

"But," said Geordie Smart, "there's some things ye canna just say there's ill into, but gin ye were expect'ing the Master Himsel' ye might maybe wish to hae them out o' sight."

"Dinna, dinna do that, lad. Gin there be ill in the things let the Master see them, dinna hide them awa'. And if ye dinna just ken whether they be ill or no, dinna hide them awa'. Let the Master see a'thing fair in the face, and syne ye'll ken whether they're to bide wi' ye or no. But dinna hae things different when the Master's wi' ye, nor what ye would when ye're by your lane.

"So the Master gangs hame wi' Zacchæus, and Mistress Zacchæus, as soon as she hears them there, she gangs to the door. She might be some on the dressy side hersel', or she might be a kind o' a slattern, and no just extra snod, but I canna say for that. But I ken this, that gin she had fau'ts, as soon as the Master gets sight o' them she would ken they werena to be allowed to bide. And as they gang ben the house, the Master looks round the room, and Zacchæus and them a' is looking. The Master doesna say naething, but folk hae mair perception than ye would think, for though He doesna say

naething they commence and mak' excuses for heaps o' things they never had a fau't wi' afore.

"That's some things the young men is ta'en up wi'," says Zacchæus. And when he explained it afore he was in the way o' saying, 'Ye hae aye to mak' allowance for young men, and no be owre partic'lar wi' them.' But he doesna say that the night, for he kens now that the gate that leads to life is strait, and that folk winna win in that arena partic'lar, whether they be young men or no.

"Syne the Master would open a book or twa that was set out on their table, and Mistress Zacchæus she would turn right red in the face, and would say, 'Thae books arena just a' that they should be, but a body is forced to read them, or they would fa' ahint the times.'

"And the Master doesna say naething. There isna naething hidden awa', He sees a' thing that's yonder, and they ken He sees it, and though He doesna say naething I ken this, that the next time He's ca's upon them things is different. Things they didna count wrong afore they dinna put up wi' now. They may fa' ahint the times or no, but thae books is put in the fire."

"It's no aye easy to ken whether a thing be right or no," said Geordie.

"This is the way ye'll ken, lad. Supposing the Master was to come ben, would ye seek to hide it awa'? For gin there be things ye wouldna wish for Him to see, ye'll ken syne whether they be right or no."

"But folk are whiles owre sensiteeve."

"They dinna loss naething by that, lad. It's them that's owre slack that losses, no them that's owre sensiteeve. Some folk dinna ken the worth o' the kingdom o' heaven. Some folk appear to

think eternity winna last mair than a twel'month. And a body canna say when the Master may come, or where He may chance to meet ye. Is a'thing as ye would hae it, for Him to see? Is a'thing snod?

"Yon was the first time He had ever met Zacchæus, or been in his house; and when He comes first it's best to let Him see a'thing just as it stands, and no to mak' nae alterations. But after He's aince got acquainted wi' ye things has a'to be altered. He'll no put up now wi' things as ye had them afore, for ye ken now what He doesna like, and it's never an excuse to naebody to say they werena expec'ing Him. For when ye've aince got acquainted wi' Him, ye maun be aye expec'ing Him. He says He'll come as a thief, and thieves aye come when they're no expec'it.

"The Master says He's like to a laird that sets off on his traivels (Mark xiii. 34), that gies orders to a'body how they're to do when he's frae hame. He says a'thing maun be attended to, and a'thing kept as snod as though he was at hame. And the laird's head-man would speir gin they could hae some notion o' when he would be back. But the laird would say, 'No, I canna gie ye nae notion o' how long I may be, for I dinna ken mysel', but ye maun just push on wi' a'thing and be sure and aye keep a'thing snod.'

"Says his man, 'Would we be to blame supposing ye was to chance to come afore a'thing was finished?'

"Says the laird, 'No. If so be ye haena idled your time there wouldna be blame to ye though a'thing mightna just be finished.'

"Says his man, 'Supposing ye was to come

back hurried, and wi' us no getting notice things mightna just be extra snod. Would we be to blame for that?'

"'Maist decidedly,' says the laird. 'For I'm telling ye plain that I dinna ken when I may be: it may be soon, or it may be late, I dinna ken. For a' I ken I might maybe be the morn.'

"Says his man, 'That'll cause a great heap o' needless expense to keep a'thing snod a' the time.'

"Says the laird, 'Is it me that's master?'

"'It is so, sir,' says his man.

"'Then,' says the laird, 'it's me that's liable wi' the expense.'

"And syne this laird he commanded the porter to watch. But there's this odds atwixt us and the folk in the parable, that we hae a' to be our ain porters. We hae a' to keep watch for oursel's and see that a'thing is at a' time in order in case the Master may chance to come.

"I mind the time when the laird o' Inchcraig came hame after he had gotten married. Jamie Paterson had letters frae him that he couldna tell when he might be, as he was coming wi' a sailing boat, but he sent word to Jamie to be sure and hae a'thing in order for the wife was right partic'lar. I mind it was desperate stormy weather wi' wind and rain, and I kent the laird couldna be till the wind shifted out o' the west. But a' the hands at Inchcraig was busy at it, cutting grass, raking roads, and a great variety o' things that had just to be done owre again the very next day. And when I sees Jamie I says, 'Mr. Paterson' (for he was aye fond o' his titles), 'this is fair useless labour, the laird canna be here afore there's a change o' wind.' And if it wasna that very day they got

word that the boat was in, and that he would be hame the morn! Syne I mind o' the welcome that was got up as soon as they heard he was landed. There was a' the bairns in the schools dressed real braw, the lassies wi' white gowns and white shearers' bonnets, and the laddies in a kind o' a uniform as though they had been sodgers. It had a' been planned aforehand, and a' thing got in readiness. And when they heard he was coming a'boddy was early astir; and afore twa o'clock in the afternoon we was a' in the South Park waiting on him. The Pitcoonans bairns was the nearest hand to the Lodge, the laddies was a' in a line on the edge o' the grass, twa feet back frae the carriage drive, and eighteen inch atwixt ilka laddie, and the lassies was facing them on the north side o' the drive. I mind it was half-three afore they got to their places. Tom Watson was on his shalt, aye galloping up and down as far as the cross-roads, to see if there wasna nae word. Jamie Bell had gone to the town, and about four o'clock he sends word that they couldna be for twa hours. And so the folk commenced to scatter. The bairns held thegither for a while, but syne ane or twa went stravaiging awa'. And syne I hears the sound o' altercation——

“‘Mag Mitchell! Mag Mitchell! ye're spottin' a' your gown!’

“Mag was a smart-like lassie, but she had come on a spring in the Park where the kye was in the way o' drinking, and if she didna start and mak' mud pies, and her wi' her white frock on! I ken mysel' the attractions there is to a bairn into the making o' thae mud pies, but yon wasna the time for it. And the tither lassies was feared they would a' be disgraced thegither, because yon lassie

Mitchell had spotted a' her gown wi' mud. Howsomever there was an auld wife (it was Marget Moyes, decent body) that set to work wi' a pocket napkin, and made the spots so as they didna attrac' very muckle attention. I mind I says to Marget, 'That's the worst o' white dresses, that the spots is a' seen.'

"'The worst o' white dresses!' says Marget. 'It's the best o' white dresses, that the spots is a' seen. Ye wouldna wish them to meet the laird wi' their gowns a' mud though it wasna seen.' Says she, 'Commend me to the white dresses, for folk hae aye to be mindfu' when they've their white things on!'

"And syne I minded that the Master's friends has aye on white dresses, and that that should gar them be circumspec'. And Marget was no sooner through than the muckle bell was sounded, for it was to ring as soon as the laird was sighted. A'body ran to their places, I never see'd folk run faster, and the Mitchell lassie was put on a shaded piece o' the road where she wasna muckle noticed. The laird hadna taen the low road, but had come in the Pittendean way, so that was how Tom Watson didna catch sight o' him, and there had been some mistak' wi' Jamie Bell's message, for it had been detained on the road. Howsomever a'thing passed off wonderfu' weel, and the laird and his lady was pleased. But Mag Mitchell was never the same lassie again. I mind o' seeing her ae day when the lave o' the bairns was a' making mud pies, and she was standing atour, and I says, 'Mag, ye was wont to be a great hand at thae mud pies. Awa' in owre wi' the lave.' And the lassie she doesna say naething, but she just lookit up in my face. So syne I minded on her disgrace on

the day o' the laird's hame-comin', and I see'd what was in her mind, so I says—

“‘Lassie, there isna nae ill into it.’ Says she, ‘I’m no caring whether there be ill in it or no, I’ll no meddle wi’ it.’ And syne I took notice o’ Mag, for I was some feared she was lossing heart, and that doesna do for beast nor bairn, nae mair than for the lave o’ us. But na, she didna loss heart, she lost her heedlessness but naething mair.”

“It’s no her that’s Mistress Simpson o’ the Brae?” said Tom.

“‘Deed is it, it’s just her, and a mair wyss-like woman it would be ill to find.

“It’s aye a sair pity when onything brings a blemish on a day o’ rejoicin’, but still and on folk soon forgets. But the thing that I would grudge is this—gin we were to be put to shame on the day o’ the Master’s hame-comin’. He says He’ll see us again, and our hearts’ll rejoice, and naebody’ll get leave to hinder our joy. It’ll be the grandest day in a’ the worl’, there’s never been naething to match it. So see aye and hae a’t hing snod, for ye dinna ken when He may come. See aye and hae a’t hing snod.”

MAN'S NO MACHINE MADE

WE used sometimes to feel annoyed that Sandy did not give a direct answer when we sought his advice in cases of conscience. If we were to ask him, "Is such-and-such a thing right or wrong?" his reply would probably be, "Was it for yoursel', laddie?" And when we assured him we merely wished to know whether it was right or wrong in the 'abstract, without any reference to ourselves (for of course what was right for others must be right for us) he would look stupid and answer, "I couldna say."

Now some of us were honestly anxious to do right, and longed for definite knowledge as to what was right and what was wrong. We were keen to keep well within bounds, but had no wish to be needlessly scrupulous, and so were much disappointed that Sandy either could not or would not help us.

One Sabbath evening, however, Dave Paterson, who had been working from home for some weeks, brought matters to a head by saying, "It's an awfu' pity there wasna a bit list o' a'thing that's right and o' a'thing that's wrong. Then ye would hae nae mair ado than just turn up and see whether ye had leave to do this and that. It might hae been like thae lists Moses had o' what

ye werena to meddle wi', the Eagle, the Ossifrage, and the Osprey, the Gled, the Kite, and the Vulture. It would hae been fine and handy."

"Na, lad, that wouldna work, for man's no machine made, and folk arena a' alike. Man wasna cast in a mould, but he was like wrought special. Ilka man stands by himsel', and ilka man maun gie an account o' himsel'. Ilka man has his ain instructions, and he maunna mix them up wi' his neebour's."

"But there maun be a definite right and a definite wrong in a' thing," said Dave; "what's wrong canna be right and what's right canna be wrong to nae man."

"Ah, lad, it's a heap mair complicate than that. There is things that's definite right, and there is things that is definite wrong, but there's heaps o' things that shifts about, whiles right and whiles wrong, right to ae lad and wrong to anither, wrong to ae lad and right to anither, and it's them ye hae to battle wi'. Do ye no mind o' what the evil things was that the children of Israel lusted after?"

"No."

"Bread and meat and ingans."

"But they couldna be evil things."

"Na, no as a generality, but they was evil to them. They had nae business to seek them the way they sought them, and the time they sought, and the Apostle Paul he says they was evil things,—bread and meat and ingans."

"But however can a body ken? It'll be a fair confusion."

"Na, a'body has the wit to ken, gin they hae the will to ken. Folk hae mair sense than they let on, and a'body has their conscience to gang by."

"But it's there the fix comes in, for a'bod's conscience isna alike. There's some things my conscience 'll mark wrong to me that anither lad's conscience 'll mark right to him, so I canna be bound by mine's. I ken a man, and a God-fearing man, that has some ways o' working I wouldna feel very easy about, but when I sees his conscience doesna appear to check him, I've nae business to heed my conscience though it was to check me gin I was to follow the same road."

"Ay, lad, ye maun be bound by your ain conscience, ye've naething ado wi' your neebour's."

"But gin I haena abused my conscience, and it be natural higher set than his, I canna compete wi' him. That's no fair play."

"Cautious, lad, cautious. The Apostle Paul had the start o' ye there, and says he, 'Who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?' There's heaps o' folk that cry, 'Gin this be right to Jamie Simpson, it canna be wrong to me,' but dinna be misled by that. Jamie Simpson, whoever he be, 'll be judged by whether he's square wi' his ain conscience, and you by your ain."

"It's somelike what Johnny Shaw used to crack about. Ye wouldna ken Johnny Shaw that used to bide at New Mains, he was some friend o' the wife's. Johnny and me was fine acquaint, and Johnny had a heap o' information. He was far traivelled beis maist o' folk, India, Africa, America, and aince or twice as far as Australia. He was a chiel o' some consequence, was Johnny. He had haen the management on board o' some o' thae big steamboats to look after a' the gentry, an' there was aye a fine style about Johnny, an' though the

like o' me could crack to him fine, mony an ane took Johnny for a laird, he was that stout an' genteel like. Folk said he left twa hunder pound to New Mains by his will, but I couldna say for the truth o't. He maun hae left them something, for afore the sax month was out they had a new gig an' a piano, an' a'boddy kens ye'll no raise pianos off New Mains, no nor gigs neither, the soil's ower thin for that, but still an' on, it mightna hae been twa hunder.

"Howsomever, the thing I was minding about Johnny the night, it was when we was cracking about folk's conscience being set different and yet a'boddy to gang by their ain. Weel, Johnny, he says when he was in America, a' the clocks yonder was set to a different time frae ours, and in India the same, and Australia he said it was desperate different. He said as soon as he got landed he had aye to shift his watch to suit the time o' the place. But, says I, Johnny, that's no right, naeboddy would convince me to alter my watch for nae place gin I kent I had the right time.

"'Weel,' says Johnny, 'it's like this, there's ae time right for ae place and ae time for anither, an' gin ye dinna work by the time o' the place ye'll land yoursel' in a mess.'

"'Hoots, Johnny,' says I, 'time is a definite thing, no just to be altered to suit the capers o' different places.'

"But Johnny, he says 'No,' and he was to gie me the scientifics o' it, but I never could gang nae depth intil scientifics, so I didna mak' muckle o' it, but he had a power o' explanations wi' him.

"Weel, whether it be the case or no (and I'm no misdoubting Johnny), I was thinking supposing

it be the case, and folk frae diverse parts a' gets orders to appear in Heaven at twal' o'clock. The lad frae America would be there at 12 by American time, the lad frae India by the Indian time, and the Australian lad would be desperate late, but gin they were a' there at 12 o'clock by their ain time, they wouldna be blamed. But gin the American lad was heedless and was ahint his time, he couldna excuse himsel' and say he was counting by Australian time, the excuse wouldna haud up Yonder. Or gin he had abused his watch, he couldna put the blame upon it. Gin he bena there sharp till his ain time he maun bear his blame. It's their ain time they maun gang by, and it's our ain conscience we maun gang by. Your ain conscience, gin it hasna been abused, maun be your guide.

"And mind ye, gin a body gang again their conscience, it slackens the springs o' it, and sets it wrong. They tell me thae railroad men can be jailed gin they gang on when the signal's up, and I'm thinking gin that was the way wi' folk that gang again a signal, there wouldna be nae word o' dull trade in the jails, for heaps o' folk gang straight forrit through their consciences, fair again them. And the springs o' a body's conscience is desperate fine beis railroad signals; aye, they're fine beis the springs of a watch, and gin ye gang ower them when the signal's conter, it slackens them and they canna be lippeden to syne."

"Is there no nae way to get them repaired like?"

"Aye is there, lad. Gin folk would take them back to their Maker, He would soon set them right, but it's no every ane that seeks to hae a right-working conscience."

Dave Paterson seemed decidedly uncomfortable as Sandy went on, and he said to Tom in a some-

what bitter tone as we left: "It's to be a stiffer job than I thought, Tom."

"Stiff! Man, that's the beauty o' it," said Tom. "Gin the road to Heaven was owre smooth it would take me to keep my grip, but when there's a bit o' brae, a body braces for it."

Dave was having a struggle and was even doubtful in his own mind as to which side would win, but those of us who knew him hadn't a shadow of doubt, for we knew Whom he had believed. Next morning his face was bubbling over with fun, so that it was an unnecessary question we asked him. "The black dog's awa', Dave?"

"Aye is it," he said, "and it was my ain blame it hovered about so long, for I had had some bits o' banes it had gotten scent o' and I've ta'en a memorandum o' that fact.

'Dogs dinna bide where there's nae meat,
Satan gangs hame when he's naething to eat.'

And Dave jumped the dyke and was off to his work at the trot.

Some years later Dave got a good chance and started in business for himself, but it's not a big business and it's not likely to become so very quickly. When last I saw him there was a "big job" which he could have got and would have found very profitable. When I hinted to him what a lot of good might have been done with the money, he laughed so that I was quite ashamed of myself. "Yes," he said, "Satan was at me two or three times about the good I could do with that money. I never kent him so eager for good afore. But he's aye like to be that till the money's made, and then he has more hesitation and speaks about family claims and all that. I'm not ignorant of

some of his devices." I still tried to impress upon him that he could have a big business and yet keep quite clear of anything questionable.

"Oh," he said, "I know some men can do it. But you know my nature. I'm owre keen, and I'll no chance it. It's no worth while for a' the time. Eternity 'll be here in a jiffy, an' I maun hae an eye to the main chance. Better to enter into life wi' a sma' business than having a big business to be cast into hell fire. I don't mean to apply that to others, but I'll no risk it. Man, if I were a preacher I would keep crying, 'There's owre many hands and feet among Christian folk. Hands and feet is usefu' things, and hands and feet is sair to cut off, and a body looks awkward wanting them, but out wi' your axe gin they be in your road.' Folk may say, 'A poor ae-sided character,' but cry ye back, 'Better be ae-sided than no to win in at a'.' The Gate into Life is some inches narrower than some folk think, an' ye maun suit yersel' to the gate, for it'll no alter a hair's-breadth to suit you. Lay down your plans and stick to them."

A JOB FOR YOUNG FOLK

“W E’LL take a peep into this prayer meeting,” said Sandy.

“Prayer meetings are no just desperate lively. Someway I dinna ken where the fau’t lies.”

“No, they’re whiles no desperate lively, and as for the fau’t, it lies wi’ a’body. There’s fau’t wi’ them that gang, a good heap o’ fau’t, and there’s fau’t wi’ them that dinna gang, a great heap mair o’ fau’t. And there’s this, though we’re like to think a prayer meetin’s a gey sma’ affair and no o’ muckle consequence, Satan disna. There’s no a prayer meeting but what he aye attends reg’lar. He can boast that he hasna missed ane, weet or dry, a’ these eighteen hundred years. He might chance to miss a sermon and no vex himsel’, but there’s no a prayer meeting but what he’s aye at it. There might be an antrin ane he’s found owre warm to be comfortable, but he’s had little cause to complain. And mind ye, lads, Satan kens his business, and he wouldna be sae eident on thae prayer meetings gin he didna place by-ordnar importance on them. There’s many a Sabbath that though he were to take a day’s holiday to himsel’ things wouldna gang far astray, and the like o’ thae business meetings o’ ministers, office-bearers and that, he doesna heed though he never gangs near them, there’s aye plenty folk to do his

work. But gin thae prayer meetings were let be, Satan would hae to take to some other trade, for there wouldna be as muckle profit left as would buy his breakfast to him."

"But supposing Satan's aye there, that needna make them sae desperate dull and senseless like."

"But that's where he shows his wit, laddie, he kens that gin he manage to make them dull they'll no harm him syne."

"I would like to gang to a prayer meeting fine, but supposing ye gang, wha div ye meet? Twa or three auld wives, and twa or three auld men, mair auld-wifish than the wives themselves, and gin there be a young lad among them, if there's a case o' embezzlement the suspicion aye fa's on him, and as like as no it's him that did it."

"That's just what I'm telling ye, laddie. Satan pays partic'lar attention to ilka prayer meeting, and it's him that arranges a' that."

"But we're no needing to submit to Satan in a' thing."

"No, we're no needing. And gin ye seek a big victory for the Master, there's your chance. Devise ye some plan for setting prayer meetings right and ye'll do mair for the cause o' God than maist folk. I'll gie ye my ideas for a start, some o' the things ye're no to do, but they'll no carry ye far. Dinna say there maun be less prayer, and dinna say there maun be fewer meetings. Dinna turn the meetings into consairts or picnics, and dinna despise the auld wives that gang, for gin ye hae as muckle sense as Satan, ye'll no think little o' an auld wife. Satan will face a mid-aged man, but I've kent him flee frae an auld wife. And dinna despise the auld-wifish-like men, or ye'll get yoursel' into a scrape, for though they mayna be fit for a day's

wark, they're maist o' them fit for a night o' prayer, and mind ye they're sib to the King. Dinna say ye'll stop at hame and do your praying there. And the laddie that's gaun to embezzle, make freends wi' him, and gin he doesna shift his ways, make ye the meeting owre hot for him. And dinna think ye hae an uncommon gift o' prayer, for a'boddy thinks that o' themsel's, and gin Satan werena mair prudent than maist o' folk, ye would whiles hear him laughing to himsel' as ane after anither gets up to pray and says to themsel's, 'It's no mony an ane can put up a prayer like to me.'

"I ken there's muckle in a' ye say for a lad no to gang, and Satan kens it, but gin ye say ye winna gang, then that's ane to Satan, it's his side that wins the night. And ye'll never hear him say he's no to gang, he'll no miss his prayer meeting for naething; he's some perseverance, has Satan."

"It'll hae to be a stand-up fight."

"Ay will it, and wha's fitter to fight than young lads? Says Satan, 'Fight neither wi' sma' nor great, but only wi' thae prayer meetings.' And cry ye back, 'It's a bargain.' Lay down your plans, and syne shout for the battle, and gin ye rectify thae prayer meetings ye'll get the thanks o' the King, and that's worth the fighting for. I canna tell ye how to do it, but it maun be done some way. An ye're no the lads to start wi' a bit o' a cheer and syne cry off when ye're half-roads through.

"I've seen the race that bairns rin,
No mony steps and done wi' it;
They dinna heed a'though they're beat,
As blythe's they ne'er began wi' it.

"The laddies rin wi' a' their micht,
As like's they made a trade o' it ;
Gin they be beat they're put aboot,
The hinmaist's aye dismayed o' it.

"The halflin', he's mair sweer to rin,
But gin he maks a trial o' it,
A gey sair job to put him out,
He winna tak denial o' it.

"But muckle men when they're to rin,
It's no a game ava, lads ;
It's doonricht wark frae first to last ;
It's shame on them that fa', lads.

"Ay, lads, ye're nae just halflin' laddies. It'll
be a doonricht wark wi' ye, a fine fight wi' Satan,
but a bit o' a battle brightens a body up, an gin
I'm no mista'en it's him as'll get an unco' fleg."

OLD TESTAMENT SAINTS

"**I** WOULD hae made a fine Old Testament saint," muttered Jamie Stewart, as we sat down.

"Jim, lad," said Sandy, "I'm feared there's no muckle o' the saint about ye, be it Old Testament or New."

"That's aye what ye say, Sandy, but I would hae passed muster fine gin I had been amongst Old Testament folk. They hadna that enthusiasm folk nowadays think they maun aye hae in religion. Religion should aye be keepit weel intil its ain place—it shouldna attract attention."

"Ye needna be none feared, Jim, for a' the religion ye hae'll never attract naeboddy's attention. But ye're right in the other thing, that religion should be keepit til its ain place. There's nae twa ways about that; the job is to ken what its ain place is. So far as I mind, its place in the Scriptures, be it Old Testament or New, was aye the foremaist, and it sippit through a' thing. It was aye to love the Lord wi' a' the heart and a' the soul and a' the strength and a' the mind, so gin ye see folk loving Him and His concerns wi' mair than that, wi' mair than a' their heart, and a' their soul, and a' their strength, and a' their mind, ye're free to check them.

"And as for Old Testament saints, lad, it's no

long sin' I was reading o' what Old Testament saints was like, and no the pick o' them, mind ye. Them that had charge o' the work o' the Lord had to complain to Moses (ye'll find it in the 36th o' Exodus) that the folk brought ben a muckle heap mair nor what was required, so that Moses had to gie orders for naebody tae bring nae mair, as they had owre muckle. I dinna hear nae complaint o' that sort nowadays, but they had owre muckle enthusiasm, thae Old Testament saints, and mind ye the Exodus anes werena the cream o' them neither. So gin ye gie me the history o' folk at the present time that can show the marrow o' that, we'll sit and listen tae ye."

Jim did not respond to the challenge, so Sandy continued, "The thing that fashes me about Christian folk nowadays is no that they hae owre muckle but that they hae a gey heap owre little enthusiasm.

"If I was at the setting out o' some o' thae missionaries, I would hae a drummer boy sent wi' them to let them ken they were conquering. The best o' bairns is they dinna ken when to bide quiet, they're apt to sing when folk's in distress, and thae drummer laddies is like them. They're that ta'en up wi' their drum they winna bide still for naething, they dinna see when a' thing's against them. Ay, I wad hae a drum wi' ilka mission.

"I mind ae day as I was in at the market the sodgers came by wi' their drums, and do what I likit my feet widna bide still. A' the lads was of ae mind, there wasna ane for this road and ane for that, ane at the hop and ane at the gallop, but they a' beat time to the drum and they were richt prood o' themsel's. Ye wudna

credit it, but gin I hadna ta'en a grip o' a post that was handy it's my belief that I would hae been aff wi' them. 'March, march,' I says to mysel', and my head was bobbing and my feet was capering, they wudna bide still nae way, till I begu'd to fear it would waste the soles o' my boots. (It was my Sabbath boots I had on, an' there wasna muckle come and go wi' them gin they took to capering on flag pavements. I was some feared it was to be the finish o' them.) I was that angered at my feet that I didna see a' the show, for I had to reason wi' thae feet that it wasna a wysslike thing to gang clamp, clamping that way in the streets o' a muckle town. But they didna heed, no them, so lang's they could hear the sound o' that drum.

"When I comes hame I thinks to mysel' o' the brawness o' it. And there was a verse that I couldna make head or tail o', 'The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them, that they may be one.' And I says to mysel', I hae it noo. The thing that made the sodgers step out so braw, and ilka ane keep time wi' his neighbour, it's the glory, that's what keeps them thegither! I was wont to think the glory the Master gave us was in Heaven, but I'm no just sure. I'm thinking He's gi'en us glory here but we've kind o' lost sight o' it, and we dinna win half the battles wanting it. Get a good grip o' glory, and ye'll no step owre heavy. It's the glory puts the spirit in their feet. Had I been a scholar I would hae likit to hae had the meaning o' glory, but we're maybe no very far aff gin we say it's them being proud o' their Captain, and proud o' their comrades, and proud o' their coats, and proud o' their cause. Boast o' your Captain to your heart's content, ye canna think owre muckle

o' Him. Be proud o' yer cause, for there's nane as good. Be proud o' your comrades, and dinna think little o' your coat. Keep aye in mind the glory o' the regiment, and ye'll keep time wi' the lave. Keep sight o' the glory, and ye'll knock folk down like ninepins. A'boddy would see ye was winning gin ye aince had a grip o' the glory.

"But I'm rinnin' ower far awa' frae thae Old Testament saints. They didna a' jine up like sodgers. They had, the maist o' them, to stan' by themsel's, like the mighty man that lifted up his spear against three hundred men at aince, and slew them a'. Jim, lad, are ye ready?"

"I'm listening, Sandy."

"But o' them a' it's David that has the foremaist place wi' me, for I'm thinking it would be he that gied the foremaist place to God.

"Twa or three nights syne I was taking a kind o' heedless run through the Scriptures to see gin I could light upon some fancy piece, and when I sees the 8th verse o' the 63rd Psalm, 'My soul followeth hard after Thee, Thy right hand upholdeth me,' thinks I, 'Ye're like a bairn, King David, but ye're like yersel.' He says he's trying to catch up wi' the Almighty, and he's out o' braith wi' running so sair. He's gey near beat following hard after Him. He's feared he'll no catch up wi' Him, yet a' the time he kens that His right hand's upholding him.

"Ye'll see a man on a summer's night when he's hame frae his wark and he's had his tea, and a' cleaned up, and he gangs to the door to play wi' his bairn, and he's seekin' to learn the bairn to walk. Says he to the bairn, 'Come awa,' and aye when the bairn gies a step, the faither he steps as weel. Syne the faither gets a grip o' the bairnie's hand, and says he till him, 'Rin and catch me,' an

he takes a bit run in front o' the door, the bairnie aye thinking he's winning nearer hand, and the faither aye keeping in front, and aye wi' a grip o' the bairn. And after maybe a meenit or twa he halts and lets the bairnie catch him. And that's the way he learns him tae rin.

"And here's King David the very same. The Almighty has hold o' him by the hand, and King David says, 'I'm following hard, I'm runnin' wi' a' my might.' And it'll no be lang, I'm thinking, afore the Almighty'll let him ken that he's caught up wi' Him. He's learning King David to run.

"Syne I turned back to Psalm 62 (for I was in a restless kind o' humour) and I sees him in the 5th verse giving his directions to his soul. 'My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from Him.' I ken where a' the guid things come frae, they're frae Him.

"I'm o' the same mind as ye, Jim. I would like fine to be ane o' thae Old Testament saints."

WAS MOSES DISCONSAIRTED?

“**T**HERE’S whiles I’m like to think what an awfu’ consternation would be in Heaven when they heard the Dying Thief was coming ben.

“Ane o’ the Prophets, as soon as he heard the news, would take a step owre to where Moses was, and commence to crack. Says he, ‘That was aye what I said, it’ll no work, this abolishing o’ the Law. Ye little thought ye would live to see the day when a thief that was condemned to death as a thief would come fair up to Heaven. I kent this new plan wouldna work, but I never so muckle as dreamt o’ this, that thieves and murderers, straight frae the gallows, would win in to Heaven. It puts a stop to a’ manner o’ good living. There’ll no be such a thing as good morals nae mair. I wonder that the like o’ you isna mair disconsairted by it. And the respectable folk, they’ll no seek to win in to Heaven when it’s crowded up wi’ the like o’ thae thieves, and nae wonder.’

“Says Moses, ‘Ye hae nae belief in repentance?’

“And the tither would say, ‘Aye have I, in downright thorough repentance. I wouldna hae been here mysel’ had it no been for repentance, but a’body could see I was a changed man.’

"Says Moses, 'Will the dying thief no repent?'

"'He canna, for he hasna time to gie proof o' it.' And while they're cracking there's a sound o' music at the gates, and when they turn to look—they're fair dazzled wi' the sight! It's someone entering in to Heaven, and they havena seen ane as braw enter in to Heaven afore. Aye, they're fair dazzled, and the prophet, he whispers to Moses, 'It'll be the Apostle John. I never saw the marrow o' it, ye can see righteousness in the very folds o' his wings.'

"'John!' says Moses. 'It's no John, it's yon thief, and gin he be na fit for Heaven ye and me'll hae to shift.'

"'The dying thief!' says the tither. 'It canna be, there's no a brawer sight in the whole o' Heaven. Ye maun be mista'en.'

"'No,' says Moses, 'I'm no mista'en.'

"And the tither doesna ken what to say. 'Gin that be the thief, then the brightness an' the brawness maun be a' external like, gilded on to the outside o' him, but there's nae doubt it's exceptional braw,' and he wanders awa'.

"But Moses cries, 'Come here a minute and dinna gang awa' wi' wrong notions in your head. I'll explain to ye the nature o' imputed righteousness.'

"Lads, when I hear folk say they would hae likit mair proof o' the thief's repentance, I'm like to speir if they ken anither ane that was as bold for the Master and as sair on himsel' as him. I'm like to speir if they themsel's hae ever tellt a single ane that this Man had done nothing amiss, that this Man has a kingdom worth the winning. I'm like to speir if they're willing to believe that

God gives eternal Life as a free gift to the worst man that's willing to have it."

"Was the thief a Christian?"

"Aye was he, and the only Christian in a' the world bold enough to speak out for the Master in that hour."

"But it wouldna need muckle boldness frae him."

"Aye did it. It needed courage and it needed God's great grace. 'External gilding' did ye ca' it? Na, na, this was purest gowd, and it came frae the very heart o' the man. I wish I was like him."

"But, lads, I wunner muckle mair at the Master, that He's no ashamed to take praise and honour frae a thief, that He disna refuse to hae it, and oh, I wunner sair that He would say afore them a', 'This day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.' Some there would be half-minded to stand by Him, but when they heard Him speak like that to a thief they would turn awa' and say, 'Na, that's a shade ower laigh; gif thieves is in we'll bide out.' They would say He had lost faith in His own kingdom, or He would never have letten in this thief, and him no time to reform. They would say, 'This wasna the way He spake when He laid down the laws o' His kingdom yon day on the brae-side.' And a' the world owre when they heard o' the thief they would say, 'This Man was not of God or He wouldna hae let this thief in.'

"And it's nae wunner yon thief was sae braw, for wasna he the first o' a' the Master's freen's o' whom He could say up Yonder, in the very Presence o' His Father and o' a' the company o' Heaven, 'The glory which Thou gavest me I have given them?' That maun hae been the way

the Prophet was sae dazzled wi' the sight. He hadna seen the like afore. And syne he would unnerstan' mair o' the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, mair o' that wondrous love o' God that passeth knowledge, for it's aye learning they are up Yonder."

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